The journey of course approval
hitting the target but missing the point?

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THE JOURNEY OF COURSE APPROVAL: HITTING THE TARGET BUT MISSING THE POINT?

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Abstract

Whilst a significant body of research exists related to quality assurance in UK higher education (HE), few questions appear to have been raised about the commonplace practice of validation or approval of degree courses. Overall, current research tends to focus on complications arising from the procedural effects of the process, rather than exploring ways that staff dealt with the demands of these systems. This study examined staff experiences of course approval within Allied Health Profession degree courses in a UK university. The research focused on how governance structures surrounding the regulation of health professionals and universities shaped the practice(s) of approval, alongside ways in which this experience affected staff.

Influenced by the work of theorists in critical and social theory traditions, this in-depth study adopted narrative inquiry. Purposive sampling was used to locate twelve participants and included academics, manager-academics, staff who worked in professional bodies and within teams supporting quality in HE. In order to examine the issues related to the approval process, data was collected through interview conversations, participants' drawings and prose, along with documentary analysis.

This research revealed the narrative of approval as complex and akin to a journey involving a series of challenges, contradictions and multiplicity of stakeholders. Interpretation of the data illustrated that those participating were both constituted by, and contributed to the nature of approval. In other words, rather than being docile recipients' of policy, it was apparent that staff appeared to take various approaches to thinking, acting and relating. A sense of *adopting a position* (termed here as positional identities) emerged and influenced not only participants' journey through the approval process, but also that of others, as well as the shape and nature of courses being approved. Four positional identities were identified, namely: the Governance Trustee, Professional Guardian, Enabling Strategist and Boundary Broker. Each of these positions was subsequently explored through an exploratory conceptual map of positional identity. The emergent map stimulated the re-assessment of current conditions. Consequently, future possibilities in which approval scenarios may evolve are presented.

Considering how policy changes within HE have promoted increasingly performative practices, and the ways in which participants in approval events have presented them 'selves', it is likely that the positional identities adopted by staff here may have resonance for academics across the sector, and that this study will inform wider debates about policy and validation of courses within HE in general.

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List of abbreviations

AHP	Allied Health Profession(al)
BDA	British Dietetic Association
CHRE	Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence
COT	College of Occupational Therapists
CSP	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
DoH	Department of Health
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HPC	Health Professions Council
NHS	National Health Service
OPM	Office for Public Management
PB	Professional Body
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SHA	Strategic Health Authority
UK	United Kingdom

Related award and peer reviewed dissemination

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Khanna, R. (2009) 'Every which way but loose: The journey of re-negotiating the boundaries within a conceptual framework of a narrative inquiry' *Proceedings of the 4th International iPED Conference*. 'Researching Beyond Boundaries'. Held 14-15 Sept 2009 in Coventry, UK, 67

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Overview of the thesis

This thesis is divided into ten chapters. The first four chapters provide a background to the research, the related literature and methodology adopted. Chapter Four acts as an interpretative bridge between the intended conduct of the study and findings from the research. The initial interpretative framework that emerged from the data is identified, alongside an overview of the findings. The analysis of data was based around four positions, or positional identities: the Governance Trustee, Professional Guardian, Enabling Strategist and Boundary Broker. Each of these is presented in Chapters Five to Eight. Within Chapter Nine, the discussion develops the concept of 'positional identity'. Further, utilising an exploratory conceptual map of positional identity, consideration of the co-presence of four positional identities is explored. The study concludes by identifying the contribution of this work and offers recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the trigger for the study and presents the rationale for it against the background of higher education (HE) and specifically pre-registration Allied Heath Professional (AHP) education. The argument that underpins the thesis is identified.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to locate the inquiry and its guiding research question(s) within the context of existing literature. Though the focus of the research relates to the experience of staff working within AHP pre-registration courses, the literature within this area is comparatively small. Therefore, the review commences by considering literature from the wider perspective of HE and concludes by illuminating the gap in existing AHP research, which this study aims to fill.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology and the journey taken towards achieving the aims of the study. The first section draws out the influences on my personal stance in 'being' a researcher. The second section presents my intended 'doing', in how I tackled the research design. Finally, the third section includes a critical reflection on the conduct of the study and acknowledges the troublesomeness of 'becoming' an inquirer.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the findings. In particular, it introduces the interpretative framework and the concept of 'positional identity' that emerged from the data. Four positional identities: the Governance Trustee, Professional Guardian, Enabling Strategist and Boundary Broker are presented in brief cameos. The interpretative framework informs the structure of Chapters Five to Eight, in which each of the positional identities are examined.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS (I) GOVERNANCE TRUSTEE

This chapter presents the positional identity of the Governance Trustee within the journey of course approval, which includes involvement in both preparations for, and the event itself. Supported by narratives from the research, the practices of the Governance Trustee during the approval process are discussed.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS (II) PROFESSIONAL GUARDIAN

This chapter delineates the position of Professional Guardian within the pre-registration AHP course approval process. As with the other findings chapters, identification of the Aspects, or characteristics, of this position is examined.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS (III) ENABLING STRATEGIST

This chapter presents the position of Enabling Strategist in the course approval process. It provides a narrative image of the position along with an illustration of its Signature. The subsequent three sections follow a similar structure to the preceding chapters and discuss each of three Facets, which constitute the interpretative framework, Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action, and Interactions.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS (IV) BOUNDARY BROKER

This chapter presents the final positional identity that emerged from the study. As before, following the organisation of the interpretative framework, the understandings, action and ways of relating to others within the approval process by the Boundary Broker are explored.

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the complexities faced by staff in negotiating the demands of the course approval process. Emerging from the data the interpretative frame is further developed, including the presentation of an exploratory conceptual map of positional identity. Utilising the map, four 'positional imprints' were drawn. Each of these represents diversity in ways the approval process was dealt with by those involved. Consequently, the impacts of different combinations of positional identity are deliberated on through a series of emplotments, and implications highlighted.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

This chapter summarises the study. Firstly, implications emerging from the research for pre-registration AHP education and, in general, HE is outlined. Secondly, recommendations to support practitioners and educators who are part of profession-specific degree courses are offered. Finally, potential areas for further research as a result of this study are suggested.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

> The day had come. The team seemed unaware of the sunshine outside. Some tried to be 'upbeat'. Yet the majority were preoccupied with thoughts of aiming to get things 'right' and a good outcome from the course approval event. The panel meeting was timetabled to happen today. It had taken nearly a year of preparations to get to this point. At last all the specifications and multi-mapping were done! Like a group of schoolchildren, the team waited patiently in a line along the crowded corridor to be let in. Locally there had not been a room large enough to accommodate everyone, so we found ourselves in an unfamiliar place. And, after all that hard work, we had two hours to do justice to ourselves as educators, and the proposed course. Once the meeting had started, the atmosphere was different; it was very formal in comparison to before. It felt like the only voice that counted was that of the Regulator and securing 'approval' against their standards. We were stuck by having to be 'ticked off' against the criteria; our own stories of curriculum development were not needed.
>
> (Khanna, Personal diary, June 2005)

This study emerged from the above scenario, alongside my own increasing sense of unease with changes that had taken place in ways professional degree courses were approved. Previously, for me, approval of a course had not just been about meeting the requirements of the process itself; it also included open, reflective spaces in which colleagues deliberated about the futures of their profession and ways these could be enacted. However, it seemed that such creative spaces, and opportunities for staff to renew what their purpose was about, were becoming increasingly restricted by requirements to comply with the process of approval itself. Consequently, the approval journey of course teams seemed to privilege conformance with hitting the target of standardised measures, rather than generative activities linked to the purpose of curriculum and course review.

This research set out to examine what the experiences of staff were in the approval process linked to three Allied Health Profession (AHP) degree courses in a UK university. The study also focussed on how governance structures surrounding the regulation of health professionals and universities shaped the practice(s) of approval, ways in which this experience influenced staff, and affected the appraisal and construction of professional courses.

A professional background in occupational therapy influenced my thinking, particularly the belief that the capacity for human beings to engage in meaningful occupation is connected with their health and well-being. This concern led me to reconsider the disquiet I felt in the changing purpose of course approval (termed, then, validation) preparations and events. The nature of this activity was altering from a process that had been based on presenting, in a collegial atmosphere, a reasoned proposal, to one in which the new approaches of 'external monitoring' were driven by course proposals measured against specified frameworks. These reflections informed the basis of the research study presented in this thesis. I wanted to explore the meaning of course approval for staff and understand the conditions that shaped what happened during the process. As a result, I became interested in two issues. Firstly, the consequences of what had become known as the approval process (Health Professions Council, 2005) due to regulatory policy change. Secondly, the implications for staff of incorporating these changes related to my own area of practice in pre-registration AHP courses.

Background and rationale for the study

Historically the field of AHP education has experienced periods of relative stability. During the late 1990s regulation of health professionals and the associated approval of pre-registration education changed. As identified by Walshe (2002), the government was no longer willing to rely on traditional structures to maintain influence and control over the health professions, turning instead to statutory assisted forms of regulation. As a consequence, educators working in health professional degree programmes experienced fundamental changes to the process and institutional structures linked to course approval. These adjustments were triggered by amendments to regulatory policy, which influenced both practitioners and the education programmes supplying this sector of the healthcare workforce. It is now evident that, although within current practice curricula may be viewed as negotiable, the regulation of AHP education may limit or frame these negotiations. Despite this significant change, minimal attention appears to have been given to

the consequences of these alterations in the practice of approval within profession-specific degree programmes.

Various perspectives exist concerning what prompted the introduction of statutory regulation for health professionals, including AHPs. Some commentators believed that the change was because of increased resource pressures on public sector services. For example, in health and education, this left the government needing to legitimate itself with the electorate, as guardians of the public purse (King, 2006). Another reason was the numerous national scandals in healthcare involving deliberate or unintentional harm to patients by health professionals (Hoecht, 2006). As a consequence, various policies and monitoring organisations were initiated in the NHS. For example, 'A First Class Service' (DoH, 1998) introduced a series of measures to manage risk, initiate standards and develop 'pathways' of healthcare. Policies such as this were sustained by a wealth of monitoring agencies, for example, the Commission for Healthcare Improvement and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence. Such organisations were seen to adopt management methods borrowed from the private sector, which included the use of benchmarks, performance indicators, and protocols for practice. Moreover, connected to the practice and education of healthcare practitioners, AHP groups were not impervious to the need for greater assurances.

Prior to legislative policy change, brought about by the Health Act (Great Britain, Parliament, 1999), the approval process involved shared decision making, characterised as a tripartite validation event which included the registering body for AHPs, the respective professional body linked to the named award, and representatives of the host university who held the awarding authority. The current situation, engineered by subsequent statutory changes within The Health Professions Order (Great Britain, Parliament, 2001), identified the Health Professions Council (HPC), referred to subsequently as the 'Regulator' in this study, as holding sole responsibility for considering whether a course complied with regulatory standards (HPC, 2009). As a result of these changes, the decision making powers that other stakeholders, in particular, the professional bodies may have

held previously, to decide whether an AHP degree course might be provided by a UK university, became defunct without approval from the regulator. In essence, this change created segregation in the traditional partnership between regulator and the professional bodies. To date, few questions have been raised regarding the implications of this change, particularly on the nature of courses being approved.

Alongside creating more robust mechanisms for the registration of AHPs, protection of title and transparent processes to ensure ongoing fitness for practice of registrants, statutory change also resulted in other, far-reaching, consequences. In order to maintain their interests, AHP professional bodies subsequently identified their own systems through which courses could apply to be recognised and accredited. Therefore, to practice in the UK, not only must AHP students complete an approved HPC course, for eligibility to register with the HPC, it has also become preferable that students hold a degree recognised internationally, through completion of an accredited course. In addition, due to alterations in the way student places were financed, and by virtue of the location of AHP courses in higher education, course teams found themselves measured, also, by government funding bodies and representatives of higher education quality assurances bodies, such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). More recently, service users, including patients and students, are also having a greater say in the external quality monitoring of pre-registration courses. The consequences of all these different forms of external monitoring represent significant implications for course teams in how the whole system was navigated. Indeed, the sense of direction taken by staff in the process had become increasingly mediated by a set of external reference points. Whilst this change had not gone unnoticed amongst the different AHP communities, the alteration in perspective taking place has, in general, occurred without debate in the literature about the implications of what has taken place.

By ignoring staff experiences, the risk is that particular dominant discourses of regulation become accepted without question. In addition, spaces available for dialogue about professional futures and innovative curriculum may be crowded out by the performative requirements of evaluative agencies, such as statutory bodies.

As Cooper (2000) highlighted, in relation to anxieties connected with auditing in health, education and social care, the 'logic of proceduralism' is easily confused with the 'logic of professional meaning and values'. Consequently, for instance, within AHP course teams where staff hold multiple accountabilities these forces may compete and lead to 'a form of paralysis' (Cooper, 2000:129). Such situations produce obstacles to creativity within the review of curriculum, which informs the approval process. Indeed, Power who in 1994 was one of the earliest researchers in higher education charting the effect of increasing external monitoring on academic staff, termed these changes as an 'audit explosion'. In particular, the changing locus of power at subject level has become contested whereby, as Power (2003:192) subsequently claimed, 'auditors win out over auditees in determining the relevant policy language of professional evaluation'.

Based on the above background issues and combined with my own experience what seemed undeniable was that external monitoring activities, such as course approval events, audits and accreditation visits, were not at all straightforward and deserved further inquiry.

The argument and aims of the study

Taking into account the issues introduced within this chapter, the argument supporting this thesis is that current processes underpinning the regulation of AHPs, derail the quality of health professional education, and potentially the subsequent care offered to service users.

This argument is built on four claims, linked to the approval process, namely:

1. Due to reliance within the inspectorate approach currently adopted on such measures as compliance with threshold standards and exception reporting, staff are at risk of becoming overly fixated on a form of success connected to hitting the target of specified measures and, consequently, may overlook the purpose of the process.

2. The creative project of curriculum review, which previously has actively concerned staff, appears to have become restricted. Consequently, scope for 'reflective interruption' (Savin-Baden, 2008:69) to inform the critical appraisal of courses has become limited. Amongst current circumstances surrounding the approval of pre-registration courses, disturbance of the status quo is associated with risk. The presence of risk does not harmonise easily with the performative, outcomes-led demands placed on pre-registration health professional courses.

3. At a time when new forms of discipline-based pedagogy are being realised to support newly qualified staff to deal with the risky nature of practice, much of government policy in the regulation and education of health professionals, seems to denote standardisation and definition of learning experiences more narrowly than before.

4. Little notice has been given to the approaches used to deal with the demands of approval; so, spaces for staff to debate the development of discipline-based pedagogy may become compromised.

To explore these claims it seemed necessary for this inquiry to capture not only what the experience of approval meant to staff, but also how these meanings were possibly shaped by significant people and the agencies involved. Consequently, the aims of the study were twofold:

1. To examine the experiences of staff involved in AHP pre-registration course approval processes, as a part of overall external monitoring;
2. To explore the influences on the construction and approval of AHP pre-registration courses.

A significant issue in my research was attempting to gain access to the unsanitised views of participants separate from the pervasive influence of regulatory policy surrounding public sector services. It seemed that the narrative of approval was already being overtaken by the prescribed telling of threshold standards. Subsequently, I believed the stories of educators might become marginalised, left

untold or, worse, ignored. Therefore, for this study I chose critical, social constructionist theories to assist in bringing into question practices that, in general, appear to have become settled. In addition, through embracing a narrative approach I hoped this would support an inquiry into how the landscape of approval had come to be this way.

Summary

Against the emerging background to the area of interest for this research, the process of course approval appeared to be not all that it seemed. Indeed, far from the straightforward process that it might be considered as, these circumstances appeared to support the disquiet I initially felt, as described at the start of this chapter. In relation to my-self presented in these circumstances, I seemed to occupy what Leicester (2007) termed the role of a 'boundary spanner'. Within the space of course approval, I had become caught between my professional values as an educator and AHP, alongside the institutional imperative of gaining approval in order to produce future healthcare professionals. Such a space was challenging to occupy, as Leicester outlined

> The boundary spanner is like a lightening rod, or a canary in a mine, experiencing the turbulence outside the organisation and bringing direct feedback to those who otherwise only hear about it. As such, the boundary spanner can come to be seen as a threat – literally 'a spanner' in the works upsetting the carefully constructed aura of control and the comforts of ignorance.
>
> (Leicester, 2007:180)

Consequently, I sought to review these circumstances within the wider situation of other AHP courses. Indeed, despite the pivotal nature of external monitoring on the life of degree courses, minimal spotlight appears currently to have highlighted the changes taking place in the way courses are externally monitored and the affect this has on the staff. This query I explore next in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

(Palmer, 1987:22)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to locate the inquiry and its guiding research question(s) within the context of existing literature. This research study is set against regulatory policy changes aimed at enhancing the quality of treatment and care received by patients accessing the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom. As a consequence, healthcare professional programmes supplying future staff for the workforce and, specifically related to this study, those working within pre-registration allied health profession (AHP) courses, have experienced new forms of regulation and external monitoring practices. In this study, external monitoring practices represent a variety of mechanisms used by stakeholders to assess the provision of pre-registration AHP courses. The process of course approval, which is the focus of this research, is an example of one of these practices.

In my reflections on this challenge, Palmer's (1987:22) concern that the ways in which we know holds consequences for the ways we live, had resonance. The intended direction of policy in the public sector has focused on improvement and assurance. However, within the field of higher education (HE) de Alba et al. (2000) claimed, at a time when curriculum could be open to innovation and radical appraisal, the consequences of policy reforms had resulted in defining these more tightly than before. Yet, despite these contradictory futures, in the field of AHP pre-registration education, conditions surrounding the review and approval of courses have remained largely unquestioned.

Mindful of the circumstances surrounding changes in professional regulation and practice of approval, the requirements to ensure that AHP pre-registration courses enable graduates to be safe, evidence-informed and caring practitioners is not being challenged here. However, the argument underpinning this chapter is that the overall process, in which AHP courses are currently approved, has been uncritically applied. As a result, current processes threaten to reshape the conjoint activity of reviewing curricula. This presents as a challenge to staff in proposing responsive approaches to teaching, learning and consideration of future

professional identities to address the complexities of practice. Furthermore, supported by patterns across the literature in HE, I claim that the current process of course approval is increasingly focussed on compliance and of proving the quality of systems, rather than providing evidence about how the quality of professional education within a proposed course has been advanced.

In order to advance the aims of this study a range of online databases were utilised to search for relevant literature. Databases were chosen for their relationship with the subjects of allied health, pre-registration healthcare education and quality assurance linked to higher education. The databases accessed include:

- Academic Search Complete,
- Alternative Medicine (AMED),
- Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL),
- MEDLINE,
- Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstract (ASSIA),
- INTUTE: Health and Life Sciences,
- Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC)
- Emerald Journals.

Search terms including the use of Boolean operators and truncation/syntax were used, for example: “course approve*” OR “validat*” OR “subject review” AND “higher education” AND “allied health”.

Although substantive range of literature connected to the growth of quality assurance mechanisms in UK higher education spanning the last three decades was found, what became apparent was the dearth of comment and research studies published in this area. Indeed, literature linked to the development and

implications of quality assurance in HE within the area of AHP education and, in general, of healthcare professionals, was found worldwide to be comparatively small. In particular, studies with a specific focus on the research question linked to AHP staff experiences of course approval was lacking. Though a few research-based papers were found, for example, Lerpiniere and Kendrick (2008), the majority of material presented was opinion or discussion based papers. Such a scenario implies that little is known about the impact of regulatory change, alongside the growth of management and performative practices, on the process of approval and curriculum review in this field. Based on this review of the literature a series of themes, understood here as a collection of concerns, are identified. Concerns were identified as much by their presence, as their absence, these are subsequently pursued in this chapter and briefly presented next.

A central concern emerging from this review of the literature on staff experience of course approval was that due to the lack of published work, the process of approval, and understanding of its purposes by staff, may be assumed as unproblematic, and uncritically applied. Indeed, as will be explored later, this situation may have been compounded by the multiplicity of quality monitoring methods and associated terms in use acting on AHP pre-registration courses in HE. In connection with staff conforming to external monitoring systems, several challenges were raised, for example by Davies et al. (2006), linked to implications of quality assessment practices on teaching and learning, these issues are subsequently explored.

A further issue was the paucity of critique linked to repercussions of external monitoring and various stakeholders involved, both in the short term related to the scope of course proposals, and longer-term implications on professional identities. Connected to these circumstances, the concern raised here is that such a vacuum in debate creates the potential for misunderstandings to emerge, and for the focus of staff in the justification and development of discipline pedagogies to become derailed by an overemphasis on processual issues. In particular, misunderstandings

within course teams who are looking for advice on how to cope with the demands of multiple evaluative processes acting on their courses, and individual stakeholder groups, who are seeking to further their own specific agendas, presents as a challenging landscape to staff who are required to meet these requirements. This concern was exemplified by the early work of Churchman and Woodhouse (1999) who examined the changing relationship between course teams, government agencies and professional bodies. This study, alongside others concerned with changing nature of stakeholders meant, therefore, that course team members involved in the process of course approval need to be as adept in managing the audience of stakeholders involved, as they were in seeking to comply with their requirements.

The review commences by considering literature from the wider perspective of HE within and outside the U.K. and concludes by illuminating a substantive gap in existing AHP research, which this study aims to fill. The chapter is organised into four sections:

- The first section provides a brief examination of the overall purpose of external monitoring and how it is defined. In particular, critical differences in perceptions of external monitoring and its different forms, which include the process of course approval, are highlighted.
- The second section documents catalysts for change in the regulation of AHPs and resultant effect on the approval of pre-registration courses. The subsequent rise of new managerialist practices in HE and implications for relationships between professional groups and the state are summarised.
- Section three reviews the literature and research connected to the consequences created by the use of external monitoring methods within HE. Particular reference is made to evaluations of regulation and monitoring mechanisms, the influences of these on the nature of teaching and learning, alongside challenges to professional collegiality and values.

- The final section presents the literature and research connected to the experiences of staff within external monitoring and specifically the process of approval for health professional courses.

Section 1: The overall purpose and enactment of external monitoring

On the cusp of the 21st century renewed importance on forms of accountability within public services gained impetus. Consequently, a series of government reforms, in sectors such as health and education, aimed at modernising and ensuring quality were established. Specifically linked to pre-registration AHP courses this section provides a brief examination of the purpose of external monitoring and its different forms, which includes course approval. In particular, critical differences in perceptions of external monitoring are highlighted.

Forms of external monitoring in allied health pre-registration courses

The experience of external monitoring by AHP pre-registration course teams has been complicated by their bordered position between HE and professional practice. As such, course teams in 2011 remain at the centre of what has been termed earlier as a 'mixed regulatory regime' of scrutiny (Jackson, 1997b:166). Consequently, AHP pre-registration courses are monitored externally by at least three main sources, namely, the Regulator (the Health Professions Council), the respective professional body and, due to their location in a university setting, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). This nexus, resembles what Power (1994) initially identified as the 'audit explosion', which arose in response to co-ordinating different kinds of organisations such as universities, schools, hospitals and securing accountable relationships to the state.

Forms of external monitoring include the process of course approval or validation, as well as audit and accreditation. Indeed, what was noticeable about AHP external monitoring is how over time changes in the culture surrounding the process were epitomized in the methods and language used. Historically, the term 'validation'

was associated with an agreement that a course had met the requirements in order for it to be provided. This form of monitoring principally involved internal validation through peer appraisal. In relation to AHP courses, this included a tripartite decision making process, which differed markedly from the current situation based on monitoring led by regulation. In this instance, "approval" represents a definitive, objective process in which an official decision regarding the capacity of a course to demonstrate compliance with explicit criteria is made. Three current methods of external monitoring to which pre-registration courses are subject are outlined here, namely:

Approval: This provides an official decision concerning the capacity of a programme to demonstrate compliance with explicit criteria. Approval is either granted or not. In the case of AHP courses approval is a decision given solely by the Health Professions Council (HPC) and confers national recognition that 'any programme we approve meets all of our standards' (HPC, 2009).

Accreditation: This involves an authorising power that acknowledges certain standards have been met by a proposed course and its supporting team and organisation. Implicitly, this involves some form of benchmarking assessment. When accreditation or recognition is granted this commonly denotes the issuing of a 'quality label' to a course. In relation to AHP courses, due to regulatory changes Professional Bodies (PBs) took on this function.

Audit: This focuses on the examination of internal processes in which an organisation is brought to account. In the context of AHP education, this form of external monitoring is related to a public form of inspection exercised by Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) who are the sole commissioners of student places on these courses. Their remit is to place and monitor contracts for student places in relation to the workforce requirements in a designated geographic area, such as, the need for newly qualified dieticians by NHS Trusts.

Whilst several forms of monitoring operate on pre-registration courses, they differ in the degrees of statutory decision-making powers held by the various evaluative

agencies involved to ensure that those being monitored comply. In relation to AHP pre-registration courses, this means approval by the Regulator presupposes any other form of monitoring. For example, whilst an AHP course may successfully apply for, or seek to retain accreditation with a Professional Body (PB) this decision is always subject to the course being successfully approved by the HPC.

Critical differences in perceptions of external monitoring

As Trubek et al. (2008) observed, the landscape of external monitoring represents a complex institutional matrix that uses a multiplicity of methods. In addition, the presentation of terms used to describe different methods and processes to enact regulation, through external monitoring, may appear to be straightforward and innocuous. Yet, a number of critical differences in meanings exist. Such differences appear to hold implications for understanding the purpose of quality enhancement, and how external monitoring mechanisms, such as the course approval process, are enacted. Consequently, several challenges to staff comprehending the repercussions of external monitoring exist. Firstly, little has been documented about how staff working in HE define or compare their understandings of different forms of monitoring, and the implications of these on practice. Secondly, as a result, there appears to be lack of consensus in terms used and those that exist seem to be used interchangeably. Thirdly, in general, definitions may be considered uncritically. So, the conjoint nature of the approval process, including both the performative and creative aspects, may be overlooked. Whilst there have been studies that increase the potential for ambiguous understandings to arise, much of what is written is opinion and lacks connection to a view informed by research. Nevertheless, within the HE literature several writers have taken issue with the deceptive nature of regulation and its tenuous enactment through different forms of external monitoring.

Amongst a series of papers by Jackson (1997a, 1997b, 1998) the point was made and developed that the meaning of regulation involves both the act of regulating and being regulated. As such, Jackson maintained there was an inter-dependent, though

also potentially conflicting relationship between those involved due to differences in their primary interests and values (Jackson, 1997b). Either way within the current model of external monitoring operating on AHP courses the relationship reflects one of power and control. In this instance, the Regulator holds statutory powers to approve, or withdraw approval of a course; here, compliance with regulation is obligated by imposing sanctions. As Davies (2004) identified, the use of regulation is an attempt to redress harm or guarantee a service or product. This stance highlighted the potentially bifurcated purpose of external monitoring effecting AHP courses. Since compliance with regulatory requirements not only explicitly implies a move to protect patients and the public, but implicitly, for organisations' failure to gain approval may also result in loss of credibility, market share and valuable income. Such challenges were acknowledged by Strathern (2000) who argued that forms of monitoring or assessment also have other consequences. She maintained that HE is being 'moulded and managed according to what seems an almost ubiquitous consensus about aims, objectives and procedures' (2000:1). Strathern's view reflected the positivist overtones linked to measurement and prediction that are characteristic of external monitoring. Additionally, it also highlighted the existence of power dynamics to which those being regulated need to acquiesce in order to gain approval. While this perspective is informative, the argument seems to emphasise the pernicious effects of the audit culture on practice. Such a view may preclude staff adopting a stance, which indicates that they have a choice in how to manage these circumstances, or to support course teams becoming prepared to deal with the circumstances of external monitoring on their terms.

Power (2003) in his discussion paper that reviewed earlier claims about the existence of an 'audit explosion' (Power, 1994) highlighted the dilemmas created due to differences in academic staff understanding what is required of them. Since depending on how forms of external monitoring are comprehended can influence the kinds of interaction staff have within it. Power (2003:188/189) identified two lines of development: an 'accounting line of development' and 'a quality assurance line of development'. The former placed a focus on control and measures of

efficiency. The latter, was seen as more of a development approach that involved self-monitoring. Consequently, potential for conflicts to occur, due to the different value base of these two lines of development, is possible. These circumstances may particularly affect staff, such as AHP academics, who have dual accountability to the organisations in which they work employing bureaucratic processes; compared to their professional accountabilities as practitioners and educators who consider the notion of quality, using non-arithmetic descriptors. Indeed, such contradictory conditions may affect the motivations of academic staff to become involved, because of a re-orientation towards compliance with baseline standards, rather than a focus, as Giri (2000) argued, towards professional responsibility and critical self-reflection.

The above literature indicates that problems may arise depending on how the meaning of external monitoring is interpreted. One of the most important implications of this situation is that staff may become passive and unquestioningly comply with the arithmetic requirements of external monitoring, at a cost to critical review of curriculum and course structures. For example, longitudinal research based on a case study by Newton (2002) found that academic staff seemed to follow requirements without contesting them, seeing these either as an intrusion, so were reluctant to engage in it, or complied in order for the tension to be removed. Subsequently, Harvey and Newton (2004), in a literature review on external monitoring in higher education, argued more research needed to be done into the consequences of external monitoring, whilst much attention has been given to different approaches; 'what is less often examined is what the approach is supposed to do. Much seems to be taken for granted' (2004:150). It seems that for staff to become more empowered and proactive, research that will illuminate the tension between different meanings connected to external monitoring, for instance of audit and accreditation, is needed. Whilst definitions provide a useful foundational base, I propose that listing the functions and forms of external monitoring only serve to sanitise these terms further. To gain a better understanding of the influences of external monitoring on course team members, a wider consideration of the factors shaping change and establishment of new

regulatory frameworks would be informative. The next section examines the catalysts for, and supporting changes in, the regulation of AHPs and the implications this has on course teams for the ways in which courses are presently externally monitored.

Section 2: Catalysts for regulatory change and its implications on professional groups

Existing research related to the practice of external monitoring of courses, such as allied health, is disappointing. The literature primarily focuses on eliciting the motives for increased scrutiny and regulation within health services and HE. Indeed, little critical attention is given to the implications of: policy change on the nature of AHP undergraduate education; the consequences of increasing state intervention; the enlarging group of stakeholders involved; the dynamic this multifaceted cluster creates between agencies; and for staff working in course teams.

This section reviews three themes depicted in the literature. Firstly, catalysts for change in the style of regulation for (allied) healthcare professionals, due to influences in the policy stream are presented. Secondly, the conduit of 'new managerialism' supporting new forms of external monitoring, which act on academic life is examined. Thirdly, a review of the literature is provided regarding how the concept of accountability by professionals has altered.

Influences from the policy stream leading to change in the regulation of (allied) healthcare professionals

The AHP literature lacks published research into what precipitated changes in regulatory practice. Furthermore, there has been little research *per se* into the effects of policy change on academic staff working within pre-registration healthcare professional courses. Therefore, the focus is next given to reviewing the literature pertaining to policy changes that impact on healthcare professions generally. Overall, there seems to be diversity of opinion in what led to changes in regulation of healthcare professionals and various strands are presented here to

form a view. Portraying the landscape of changes in the policy stream alongside these factors is valuable, since such a perspective provides a subsequent context for staff voices and their experience of external monitoring activities, particularly course approval within AHP courses, which are largely unheard in the literature on quality in HE.

During the late 1990s, the UK government sought to provide greater rationality to public services, particularly, modernisation of the healthcare and education sectors. A combination of preconditions within what is referred to here, as the 'policy stream' (Kingdon, 1984) converged to challenge the historical mandate of the professions. The policy stream influencing change in the regulation of healthcare professionals showed three influences or undercurrents within it: the mounting inadequacy of healthcare professionals highlighted through a series of national inquiries; challenges to paternalistic approaches to care led by consumer groups; and consequences from the location of healthcare courses in HE.

A predominant factor arising from a review of the literature reflected that national scandal linked to the inadequacy of healthcare professions, and repeated organisational failures to manage these deficiencies, provided the primary undercurrent for increasing regulation. A spotlight has been offered by Walshe (2002, 2003,) into the reasons for growth in regulatory practices and its effect on healthcare organisations. Walshe (2003) identified the 'Hydra-esque' qualities of regulation in healthcare due to the various agencies involved, and their subscription to different regulatory paradigms of deterrence or compliance. The reasons for the proliferation of regulations were associated with improving performance, making organisations accountable and to regain public confidence. Subsequently, Walshe and Benson (2005) highlighted that changes in UK professional regulation lacked strategic direction and this was further complicated by the proliferation of regulatory bodies. These circumstances were confusing and the situation required greater harmonisation for it to become effective. In addition, influences from the policy stream highlighted that doubt about the credibility of healthcare professionals was at a high. In part, this was due to the criticism emerging from

several public inquiries, of most significance the Bristol Royal Inquiry Report (Kennedy, 2001) and the Shipman Inquiry Final Report (2005). In addition, media coverage presented a litany of malpractice by healthcare professionals such as Beverley Allit (Brown, 1999), Rodney Ledward (DoH, 2000b) and Peter Green (Commission for Healthcare Improvement, 2001).

Associated with doubts being raised about the efficacy of health professionals' safety to practice, a further undercurrent was reflected by mounting challenges from service users towards paternalistic approaches to treatment. This development was led by pressure from service users and consumer research. For instance, a study by Williams (2000) on behalf of the Consumers' Association, using a survey method, identified doubts that the competencies of healthcare professionals were current. It also highlighted how four out of five patients who had complained to the GMC were dissatisfied with the outcome. As a consequence, those involved questioned the probity and impartiality of proceedings. Increased lobbying by consumer groups, for example, the Institute for the Study of Civil Society and The Smith Institute, also informed health Think Tanks. What the literature highlights here is that long held practices in relation to the licensing and competence of practitioners, previously considered as private, were now being held up for public scrutiny. The imperative for more intrusion by government in the way that healthcare and education professions were regulated was increasing. Consequently, by the turn of the 21st century the reputation of health professionals had become dubious. As one commentator within a medical journal observed of the increasing indictment against doctors, 'today **more** not less, intrusion is needed' (Jolly 2001:1096).

Apart from public interest, a further undercurrent for change affecting healthcare pre-registration courses, such as those for AHPs, was specifically associated with the location in which courses took place, in HE. As a consequence of allied health courses transferring from hospital based training schools into universities, the audience of those who had an interest in these programmes widened and the nature of relationships altered. The changing relationships between higher education and

its surrounding environment were, for example, asserted by Maasen (2000) who identified firstly, that the roles of external stakeholders had become more prominent and secondly, that these external actors had become more directly involved within the internal affairs of universities. He pointed out that the traditional bilateral relationship and, in this case, similar to healthcare professional courses, between government and public sectors had altered. I believe that these observations are pertinent given the consumerist orientation HE has adopted.

Courses such as AHP pre-registration routes continue to be funded through public expenditure and, as such, have been brought to account for their efficiency and effectiveness through the operation of a quasi-market for commissioning student places in universities. The obligation of universities to be accountable to the public via funding sources is clear. Indeed, for some commentators within the academic community the rationale for monitoring was accepted and the mandate evident:

> Regulation, in a publically funded service like higher education, is an important concept because it is the means by which the interests and values of society as a whole, as well as those of the academic community, are protected
>
> (Jackson, 1998b:132)

The position of AHP pre-registration courses was understood as problematic because such course teams are at the centre of a pluralist framework that involved a variety of stakeholders. These stakeholders did not just involve students and service users but also included the commissioners of student places and employers, such as service managers and clinicians from practice. Amongst the wider academic community, the nature of these various interests has been strongly contested. A fundamental argument was that the interests of stakeholders were not neutral; being concerned as much with ensuring a return on investment from the public purse, as they were with attempts to control professional knowledge (Delanty, 2003). Based on my own experience there has been no doubt that course teams had numerous stakeholders to deal with. However, what particularly complicated the

interaction was the mixed currency of the value base between those involved, for instance, between those whose concerns were in furthering their say over curriculum, and others who were interested in productivity and reliability of course proposals to produce a good return on their investment. A fundamental question emerged from this level of dissensus, linked to stakeholder expectations, and reaching agreement about exactly what aspects of a course were being approved, for example, the interpretation of professional curriculum or evidence that a course was mapped to the standards of evaluative agencies.

A study into the expectations of external stakeholders, as supervisors and employers of undergraduate Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy programmes, was reported by Barnitt and Salmond (2000). The authors involved in a DoH 3-year commissioned study, initially reported by Wiles et al. (1999), the authors emphasised the purpose of profession-specific courses to produce graduates who were employable in the market place. Data was derived from a comparative, mixed methods study including a questionnaire and interviews. The research involved four different samples including, students from joint courses, single profession courses, and staff who were practice educators or employers of new graduates. Overall, results of this study highlighted some differences in expectations between employers, supervisors and students of new graduates' performance. Comments from employers and supervisors reflected that these participants had limited knowledge of the courses from which they recruited. Though they believed recently employed graduates held acceptable levels of competence, concerns were expressed regarding capabilities to work in specialist areas, alongside the questioning attitude graduates presented whilst in practice. The perspectives of graduates appeared to triangulate with employers' views by highlighting that employers placed a higher value on the use of initiative and independent working than they had expected. In addition, time for reflection and the use of evidence-based practice was not always encouraged. Though this research provided several useful practical recommendations to support new graduates in the workplace, and enhanced communication amongst stakeholders regarding student selection, a subsequent search of the AHP literature did not reveal any instances of how

stakeholder involvement had been later developed. In addition, the transparency of procedures used to conduct the research was unclear, particularly pertaining to comparing graduates from different professional groups, since the grounds of comparison seemed to be lacking. In addition, though an outline of the research was provided, greater clarity about the approach taken to analyse the data was required. These problems possibly arose because the authors of this article did not undertake the study themselves and relied on data from the earlier research by Wiles et al. (1999). Connected to the latter, Barnitt and Salmond themselves offered no critique of the original study and appeared to accept the credibility of the research processes and data derived from it without further question.

Despite a lack of comment regarding the inter-connections between stakeholders, particularly service managers and AHP educators, within the wider environment of higher education the effects of managerialist practices appear to have become extensive. Literature and research concerning the effects of managerialist practices on academic life, a conduit used to support enhanced regulation characterised by changes in the locus and types of decision making structures in public sector organisations, is reviewed next.

The conduit of 'new managerialism' acting on academic life

Much has been written about the influences of neo-liberalism on academic life. For example, a consistent theme is the part played by new forms of management that were developed as a response to mounting concerns across the UK, Europe and the U.S. about how public funded services could be delivered and maintained. Salter and Tapper (2000) in their policy analysis identified how, emerging from these new forms of management, a new discourse of quality assurance was identified. This discourse, imported from the private sector was to have a lasting effect by unsettling the professional values of academics and the liberal ideal of education for education's sake. The new form of management being applied to public sector services, initially labelled as 'new managerialism' (Clarke and Newman, 1994) and similar concepts such as managerialism or 'new public management' (Hood, 2000)

was characterised by organisations being run on quasi-business principles. The focus was one based on effectiveness and efficiency in order to secure continual increases in performance. To enable change, NPM initiatives are characterised as top-down, linear and management driven. The furthering of managerialist discourse and practice imported from the practice sector provided the means to support regulation within public services such as universities. Due to the lack of literature connected specifically with the experiences of AHP course teams, research derived from the broader university context is relevant to this study. Within higher education, much of the research illustrated critical views on the effects of neo-liberalist policy and NPM, rather than positive consequences. Further, in seeking to expose the nature of the performance related culture, several views reflected cynicism towards the perverse incentives of a target orientated culture (Delanty, 2003; Milliken and Colohan, 2004; Adcroft and Willis, 2005), these are briefly reviewed next.

Following on from the earlier work of Trowler (1998), who examined the links between the development of post-compulsory education and the rise of industrial capitalism, Adcroft and Willis (2005), provided a critique of performance management in the public sector. Based on existing literature the authors appraised several systems, including the QAA Subject Review process (QAA, 2002) used in higher education. They concluded that the most likely outcomes of these systems were greater commodification of services and deprofessionalisation of staff, rather than significantly enhancing services.

Milliken and Colohan (2004), in their discussion paper debating management as a means to enhance quality or increase control in universities, highlighted that 'The imposed changes are a manifestation of government belief that public services should be managed in accordance with the same criteria as any other economic undertaking' (204:383). Similarly, Delanty (2003) concluded that in NPM culture the concept of society had been superseded by the mantra of the market. Linked with HE this commercialisation resulted in forming what has been termed the 'McUniversity' (Ritzer, 2004) in which 'there is greater managerial power,

structural centralisation, increased student intake, the casualisation of labour and the elimination of efficiency' (Delanty 2003:75).

Extending the scope of this review, Deem and Brehony (2005) highlighted how 'new managerialism' was much more than a set of technical, rational practices, it should also be considered an ideology. This paper was based on the first authors' work as part of a larger ESRC supported, three stage, study (Deem et al. 2001) which generated several related articles (Deem, 2002; Deem, 2003; Deem and Brehony, 2005). The research, involving academics, manager-academics and administrators across 16 universities went beyond an inductive study focussing on experiences of regulatory governance. Instead, the authors questioned the wider context and processes emphasising 'new managerialism' as a politically driven ideology, which 'serves to promote interests and maintain relations of power (Deem and Brehony, 2005:218). The authors identified 'new managerialism' with having the following characteristics (Deem and Brehony, 2005): the primacy of the right to manage above all other activities, including the capacity to challenge professional autonomy; monitoring employee performance and encouraging self monitoring; the attainment of financial and other targets; devising mechanisms to demonstrate public audit of the quality of service delivery; development of quasi markets for services. Overall, this research showed how new managerialism as a general ideology had permeated the routines of academic practice, and that it was considered as something externally imposed. Whilst this study generated several findings, of particular interest were divisions between academics and manager-academics with several of the latter group having utilised 'new managerialism' as the means 'it affords for their own purposes, including status and future careers' (2005:229). During the last stage of the project, case studies conducted in four universities confirmed how manager-academics were seen as a distinctive group, with different interests. These abilities were not, however, rendered as a result of management training, with systematic professional development in this area being rare. Based on my own prior experience of working in the NHS, as a general manager, the pathway of experienced clinicians being foisted into management roles was common. Possible sources of enculturation were identified, for example,

from staff who had worked in the NHS and were now academics, which might account for familiarity with 'managerial speak'. Connected to this theme, findings illustrated how new managerialist imperatives were also used as levers to further individual interests in the achievement of a variety of projects. Indeed, from the findings, more disconcerting was how some participants believed that what they were doing was for the greater good. Deem and Brehony (2009) concluded that ‘new managerialism’ would continue to be perpetuated in universities, due to the ongoing need to fulfil the requirements of various stakeholders concerned with scrutinising the quality of research and teaching.

Subsequently, within a conceptual paper Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) argued how, due to multiple stakeholder involvement and marketisation of higher education, the nature of teaching and professional knowledge was not only being scrutinised but had become commodified. As Naidoo and Jamieson asserted the transfer of education into an economic worth was having a powerful influence on courses, which were now geared towards 'an “exchange”, rather than an intrinsic “use-value”’ (2005:271). In addition, the assessment of academic success had been altered, from one based on academic attainment to measures involving the number of students recruited or the number of research bids satisfying external requirements. Furthermore, Naidoo and Jamieson observed how the lecturer-student relationship was repositioned as one of a transaction that was evaluated against employer requirements. This position also had resonance with a view given previously by Gibbs (2001), who in a discussion paper considered the existence of a market in higher education linked to the process of accrediting courses and universities. Emerging from this paper, what is of specific interest is Gibbs’ claim that educational relationships have altered. A relationship Gibbs describes as ‘transactional deals between traders’ (2001:85) rather than relationships built on conversations between respectful and informed colleagues. Given these changing parameters, it seems that the nature of professional knowledge and the ways in which staff were being brought to account was being challenged, this issue is addressed next.

Alterations to the concept of accountability in the professions

The concept of professionalism traditionally recognised by society through accumulated knowledge and expertise has received wide comment. Despite the breadth of commentary, as Eraut (1994) suggested, what constitutes the boundaries of a profession are difficult to define. The notion of professionalism has been characterised in various ways, but most commonly through the identification of traits (Millerson, 1964). More recently, Allsop and Saks (2002) claimed professions can be identified as having special kinds of knowledge, which are exercised within a relationship between patient and professional where trust is a crucial element.

However, across public services such as heath and higher education under the influence of neo-liberalism and new managerialist practices new forms of power exist; Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004) argued, that neo-liberalism 'systematically undoes and reconstructs the practices of professionalism' (2004:185). Apart from holding what Eraut (2000) identified as 'public knowledge or propositional knowledge', professions are also constituted by the principle of autonomy; this notion of autonomy and traditionally the self-regulation of professional groups was underpinned by trust. Under neo-liberal forms of governance, hierarchical lines of authority replace delegated professional power; imposed specifications seek to disrupt autonomous spaces emerging (Olssen, Codd and O'Neill, 2004).

Although research has highlighted the changing nature of accountability experienced by public sector professionals, overall the perspective is misleading. Whilst several views urge that a balanced view was adopted regarding the nature of accountability, in general, many writers present a partiality for critiquing systems of accountability. For example, utilising a case study of an inner city secondary school Perryman (2006) focussed on the experience of Ofsted inspections and outlined changes in teachers' accountability. Based on findings from semi-structured interviews with teachers, she argued a shift of teacher accountability had taken place from one based on teacher professionalism towards accountability to agencies. Amongst staff the accepted discourse was that teachers were

recipients of reform, realised through what was termed a 'panotopic performativity'. Perryman used this term to describe the experience of teachers who had become so used to the ongoing presence of inspection that this led to teachers acting in ways dictated by the discourse in order to escape its demands. As a consequence, the sum efforts of the school were redirected away from education to passing the requirements of the inspection. Studies like these, whilst raising important points, presented a one sided perspective that depicts professionals as a potential victim of their circumstances.

In contrast, critical views on issues of trust, accountability and accountability of staff in higher education are also presented. For instance, research by Hoecht (2006), based on interviews with staff, compared the views of academics working within business schools in two UK universities, about the impact of quality assurance and external monitoring in their lives. Though staff perceived measures as forms of control and encroachment on their autonomy, they also recognised there were benefits for students in providing greater equity in standards of teaching and learning across courses. However, this study also highlighted staff felt less trusted due to high degrees of control they experienced imposed by the system, though as a consequence they believed collegial relations had improved due to the need to work together. In some instances, this form of collegiality was falsified by some participants who used the technical terms of the reviewers in order to play the game of audit. The research concluded by arguing that it was all too easy to polarise understandings and as a consequence the current situation was neither addressed nor professional autonomy reinstated. Consequently, further debate and inquiry was requested into understandings of ways that professional accountability could be better negotiated.

Similar to Hoecht's study on understandings of trust and accountability, research was completed by McNay (2007) who conducted a web-based survey amongst 300 'registered' practitioners with the Higher Education Academy, regarding their professional values and the values that should inform higher education. The author concluded that the responses arising from this study raised important questions

concerning the health of universities. Particularly, when comparing how the collegial values documented by the Dearing Committee (NCIHE, 1997) contrast with new managerialist principles currently in use. Emerging from the results an apparent issue was the gap between espoused policy and practice since external monitoring mechanisms were initiated to deliver the expected gains of higher quality in education. Views from this study showed that this was not the case and, instead, the creative approach which could be offered by academics to support education in reaching a diverse audience had been constrained in favour of fulfilling administrative efficiencies.

In contrast, a paper on healthcare governance and effective regulation urged that attention needed to be given to choices linked to accountability. Trubek et al. (2008) highlighted, choice was available depending on how one sees accountability, between a narrow view concentrating on 'conformity to external standards' (2008:5), or a broader view of accountability that encouraged staff to incorporate standards into self-conceptions that were monitored by peers. This model had resonance with the work by Power (2003) on different lines of influence of audit systems, though this work develops the perspective of staff further by proposing different types of question that each approach encourages staff to ask about the process. In sum, Trubek et al. (2008) suggested that a broad view prompts a series of questions leading to opportunities for development, rather than retraction or limiting, of practice.

Despite the facilitative style of this paper, these views remain anecdotal without further empirical research. In addition, questions still remain about how staff negotiated autonomous spaces within their practice. The next section pays attention to literature and research on ways staff in higher education negotiated the demands of these influences.

Section 3: Consequences on the use of external monitoring within higher education

Within the current context of higher education, the evaluation of practice by evaluative agencies surrounding AHP pre-registration courses, such as the HPC, is now constant. Indeed Salter and Tapper (2000) in their paper concerned with forms of governance and politics observed how external regulation of academic activity has become 'the natural and acceptable state of affairs' (2000:82). The focus of the third section in this chapter is to evaluate the effect created by external monitoring methods within higher education. Whilst, in general, there is considerable literature on regulation and to a lesser extent in the regulation of higher education, very little research exists about evaluating the impact of external monitoring methods on AHP pre-registration courses. Reflected by the literature this section is organised into four major strands: formal evaluations through commissioned reports, informal evaluations that emerged from the views of staff, influences on the nature of teaching and learning, and ways that the values and collegiality amongst academics have been challenged.

The effects of external monitoring processes in higher education

The evaluation of external monitoring mechanisms in higher education, which encompasses, for example, AHP courses, can be separated into commissioned reports by statutory agencies, which sought to review regulatory systems and informal evaluation by staff to the principles underpinning these methods.

Formal Evaluation: Commissioned evaluation reports

Following the Health Professions Order (Great Britain, Parliament, 2001) establishing current arrangements for the regulation of AHPs and pre-registration courses, several reviews have been undertaken (HEFCE, 2005; QAA, 2006; OPM, 2007; CHRE, 2009) and recently culminated in a government White Paper 'Enabling Excellence Autonomy and Accountability for Healthcare Workers, Social Workers and Social Care Workers' (DoH, 2011). Due to the complexity of the systems employed, and political interest in this area, these reviews largely concentrated on

evaluating the function and benefits of external monitoring connected to healthcare courses from the perspective of HE, healthcare organisations and professional statutory bodies.

Two particular reports have been highlighted for review here. Firstly, a report by HEFCE (2005), focussed on the costs and benefits of quality assurance in higher education. The cost of regulation is contentious due not only to bureaucracy required to maintain the system but also the variability of its implementation. Secondly, the Foster Review (DoH, 2006) a controversial report, identifying several decisions about the current structure and practice of regulation in the public sector, which are now being realised in the coalition government's recent White Paper (DoH, 2011).

Within the context of increasing pressures on the public purse a private company, J. M. Consulting Ltd. were tasked with a review of the costs and benefits of external quality monitoring, particularly the new QAA Institutional Audit process (QAA, 2002) and other processes connected to quality assurance (QA) of, for example, health and other areas subject to professional, statutory and regulatory body review (PSRB). The report was commissioned by a collection of stakeholders including the HEFCE, Universities UK, the Department for Employment and Skills, Standing Conference of Principals and the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group (HEFCE, 2005). This evaluation was substantive and included a sample of 12 universities involving staff in QA and students. The report found that across the institutions a diversified scene of processes was portrayed. For example, of the 12 universities, 10 had received reviews by PSRBs varying from two in one university, to 62 at the 'most reviewed' (HEFCE, 2005), however, details of timescales were difficult to establish from the report. Overall, the findings centred on the costs associated with external review, which were reported as having being reduced to approximately £40m a year. The authors proposed a further streamlining of the process of Institutional Audit in order to make further cost savings. In addition, the findings reported that in relation to health professions because education is delivered in partnership with a range of providers, and involves statutory and

professional body representation preparations remain complex and burdensome. Further, because a generic approach was adopted the process was not always designed to meet the nature of provision. The authors anticipated the introduction of a new major review process for healthcare education would be a welcome development. One of the main problems with this report was that, in principal, it focused on evaluating the costs of the process in numeric terms. Very little attention was given to non-financial benefits and disbenefits. This implied that which cannot be quantified is not prioritised; which has implications on appraising effects on teaching, learning and introduction of innovation. The implicit goal of this report was on supporting future policy. However, the nature of this objective was questionable given the position of the authors, J M Consulting a private company, who were previously involved as the authors of reports to the NHS Executive (DoH, 1996). The main purpose of external QA of healthcare courses was to ensure graduates from these subjects could practice safely and competently; however, as with other reports, this connection was not referred to.

Alongside the review being undertaken in higher education and following several scandals in healthcare, a broader review of regulation across all health professions, known as the 'Foster Review' (the regulation of the non-medical healthcare professionals), was published (DoH, 2006). This report identified several controversial decisions. Apart from the ongoing issue of better co-ordination amongst regulators, one of the most significant directives concerned the decision to monitor registration and fitness through the use of local, approved employers. The aim of this decision was to decentralise regulation further, whilst also maintaining high levels of scrutiny. Further, though the report affirmed that revalidation to apply for registration was necessary it cited the, much criticised, Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) (DoH, 2004) would form the basis of this. In addition, registration would also be extended to support workers including assistant practitioner roles, such as Emergency Care Practitioners.

The report received much critical comment from a range of professional bodies, including those of AHPs. For example, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

(2006) raised several overarching questions contesting the use of the KSF as a valid tool, particularly its sensitivity for professions working outside of the NHS. In addition, concern was stressed regarding the scope for partiality created by an employer-led approach to professional regulation. Likewise, The British Psychological Society (BPS) (2006), whose members had only recently been regulated and linked to the HPC, were particularly disquieted about the capacity of this organisation to regulate them, not least due to its 'health-only focus' (BPS, 2006:1). I agree with this opinion since, in common with participants of the three professions in this study, several have, or do, work outside the traditional boundaries of NHS practice, for instance, in the prison service, schools and social care teams. Indeed, of the pre-registration AHP courses with which I am familiar it is now common to prepare students to work in a variety of contexts outside mainstream NHS provision. This direction reflects both the diverse nature of AHPs and developing areas of their employability, particularly in the Third Sector. What was particularly noteworthy of responses from the Professional Bodies to the Foster Review, were the consistent themes of doubt linked to principles of how good regulation should work, and the particular approach adopted to external monitoring by regulatory bodies, such as the HPC. Not only did these views stand to challenge the predominant inspectorate methodology but, also, represented strong concerns regarding the continued use of generic and baseline standards. In addition, a reasonably fresh issue emerged questioning both the scope and representativeness in the panels and boards of various regulators given the changing nature of practice of those covered by the Register.

Whilst these reports raise pertinent issues about the practice of regulation, a substantive challenge to all these documents lies in the assessment of the effectiveness of regulation. Since discerning how, or whether, an external initiative created certain effects or influences was difficult. This challenge was raised by Goodlad (1995) who claimed whilst it is easy to define what 'quality' was, what has received less consideration is how these procedures have a bearing on the quality of higher education. In the case of pre-registration education, the overall use of regulation, and its enactment through approval or accreditation processes, is only

one of several mechanisms creating an impression on the quality of courses. Furthermore, as previously highlighted in section two of this chapter, AHP course teams experience pluralist stakeholder interest. Consequently, evaluation of regulation on AHP courses is complicated by the situatedness of these courses between education, practice, service and user interests. Particular stakeholder interests may sway how evaluation reports or responses are produced and presented.

Informal evaluation: Challenges by staff to principles underpinning external monitoring methods

Whilst, in general, much has been documented about the use of external monitoring methods to support regulation, such as accreditation and audit, there have been relatively few studies involving challenges to the process in healthcare professional education. As a consequence, the literature reviewed here reflects two strands: views regarding implications in the use of metrics linked to targets within the wider regulatory system of healthcare services, and the views of staff. The focus here is in relation to challenges made concerning the process, rather than experiences of the process.

Bevan and Hood (2006) in their theoretical review paper were critical in the use of targets within the healthcare system. They argued that two assumptions underpinning the use of targets were faulty. One was that difficulties associated with measurement were unimportant, specifically, that the aspect of performance assessed could adequately represent performance as a whole. The second was that the application of metrics and indicators, such as standards, would avoid gaming by those involved. Bevan and Hood concluded that these two assumptions were not justified. In addition, transparency of processes within the system has become occluded by reactive gaming. In particular, the authors identified through comparison across a large collection of data, for example, from the Healthcare Commission, Public Administration Select Committee, National Audit Office, that reporting errors and understanding of definitions were problematic. They also suggested that current measures tend to dwell on exceptions or failure, rather than

demonstrating dimensions of effectiveness, or impact by a particular team or service. From Bevan and Hood's (2006) review, a particular area of interest was the degree to which gaming undermined audit processes; identified as 'ratchet effects', 'threshold effects' and 'opportunistic output distortions' (Bevan and Hood, 2006:521). It was asserted that the government might overlook such practices to avoid bringing reported performance into question.

A view by Walshe (2007) appeared to concur with the issues raised in the above study, by proposing that the way external monitoring was undertaken matters less than how, and by whom, it is used. He also raised the issue that further research is needed into understanding how methods of external monitoring work, rather than measuring whether they work. Whilst it is difficult to make any firm generalisations from these studies with staff experiences in higher education, as they focussed on service improvement and the use of audit in the health service, the approaches used are comparable to those applied to AHP pre-registration courses.

Apart from discerning how monitoring systems work within the literature, views are presented that raise questions concerning whether, initially, their purpose and the nature of knowledge to be gained was fully considered. Newton (2000) and Harvey and Newton (2004) raised such concerns. Newton (2000) undertook a single site case study that aimed to discern the view of staff regarding whether the purpose of the quality monitoring measures, such as Subject Review, had been met. The conclusions of this study were that policy implementation was uneven and that a gap existed between understandings of what quality monitoring was designed to do and the actual implementation at local level. This research seemed to indicate that the credibility of methods used is contestable since the notion of quality had become subsumed by the imperative of accountability to demonstrate improvement. Newton argued for the value of 'close-up' studies in gaining access to local practices, and in revealing a rich variety of data sources.

A subsequent study by Harvey and Newton (2004) claimed that the merits of methods used for monitoring are diluted due to the surprising lack of thought as to their suitability. The authors concluded that methods are pre-specified using

convenience measures, with little consideration given to their intrinsic value. In addition, such means largely target strategic improvement rather than teaching and learning at local levels. An alternative model for external monitoring was proposed by Harvey and Newton (2004) based on the premise of self-regulation. Whilst the model was extremely useful in encouraging academics to reflect upon and create their own educational agenda, rather than taking it from government, how the approach may work for staff working within courses subject to professional and statutory body requirements was not addressed.

Adcroft and Willis (2005) doubted that current performance measurements systems across the public sector are fit for purpose. The authors reviewed two examples, waiting list targets in the NHS and assessment of quality in higher education courses. The authors sought to problematise the characteristics of performance assessment. For example, they argued that the more activities are broken down into component or standard parts in order to assess compliance, the less of the overall performance of staff in relation to, say, the student experience can be assessed. What is particularly interesting about this piece is that it raised the question of why, despite the proliferation of external monitoring approaches commonly imported from the private sector, we fail to consider the lessons learned regarding these practices.

Whilst it appears that, overall, the literature presented disadvantages to the processes underpinning external monitoring, there were some instances in which views reflected some advantages (Pidcock, 2006; Bellingham, 2008).

A small-scale qualitative study by Pidcock (2006) sought to identify the impact of subject benchmarking by academic and quality staff within one pre-1992 and one post-1992 university, across the same courses in arts-based and science-based subjects. Unlike the findings of other studies, this research showed that half of those involved gave a positive evaluation of benchmarking. Indeed, the author reports that none of the participants had changed anything other than presentation, as a result of the benchmarking activity. This was an interesting study, as it highlighted how many staff believed evidence of compliance with subject

benchmarking had little impact on their work. Any changes were linked to ways documents had to be presented, rather than engagement in the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Bellingham (2008) reported on a series of seminars that sought the opinions of staff concerning the value of QAA subject benchmarks. 198 representatives from a large range of HEIs were involved. Participants reported the usefulness of benchmark statements in the development of new programmes as a means of comparison by external examiners and programme approval procedures. They also acted as a reference point for external institutions developing outreach programmes overseas. However, there were several challenges about the currency of statements: the use of benchmarks as a 'tick box' exercise by review teams; the application of several sets of standards and benchmarks from several evaluative agencies onto one course; and queries about the utility of benchmarks within inter-disciplinary programmes. A shortcoming of this work was that the findings from the seminars were descriptive. Nevertheless, the views of staff begin to illustrate the complexities of external monitoring that involve something beyond the procedural.

The above literature and research indicated the use of measurements to underpin external monitoring processes as troublesome. The experience of methods, such as the use of benchmarks and standards, and how the utility of these measures are understood by academics in allied health services is an under-researched area. Indeed, Power (2003) argued there had been very little empirical investigation to understand the constitutive impacts of external monitoring, such as auditing. Further studies need to be undertaken into how staff perceive the links between, for example, course approval processes and ways these influence the nature of teaching and learning linked to fitness for purpose of graduates for the workplace.

The influences of external monitoring on the nature of teaching and learning

Within the literature, there is a lack of published studies into the ways external monitoring practices may specifically shape the curriculum or teaching and learning within pre-registration healthcare profession courses. The lack of knowledge in this

area means that little is known about the extent to which changes in regulation and governance influence the process of course approval and curriculum review. Work that has been undertaken principally elicits the effects of quality within the wider arena of higher education. The literature available reflected a mixed perspective regarding the influences of external monitoring on teaching and learning. Much criticism has been raised of the damning effects in the university sector of neo-liberal managerialist principles pervading external monitoring activities, such as Subject Review (1995-2001, 2006-7, 2010-11) later replaced by Institutional Review. Alternatively, there are also some examples, for instance Cheng (2010), in which the views of staff show that forms of external monitoring, such as audit, have promoted increased attention towards teaching and learning.

Concerns have been raised that neo-liberal influences are distorting education and, specifically, challenging approaches to teaching and learning. A conceptual paper by Gosling and D'Andrea (2000) reflected how efforts amongst staff are disconnected from the purpose of enhancing learning. It claimed that the efforts of staff focussing on the quality agenda are not only misplaced, but do not necessarily lead to enhancement of the learning experience. Issue is taken with the way that the various aspects associated with quality assurance are segmented physically and functionally into discrete divisions. Consequently, the authors argued that those involved within quality assurance resemble a divided group. Rather than presenting an integrated approach the effect is one of competing agendas based on different value bases. This work has resonance with research previously referred to by Walsh and Freeman (2002) in the healthcare sector, which indicated that the process of evaluation will remain contestable in arenas where the model used remains as polarities between a focus on improvement or enhancement.

The work of Naidoo (2005) also highlighted how teaching and learning are being distorted by 'quasi-market levers'. As such, she claimed learning resources are inclined to becoming standardised. Such measures are taken to 'teacher proof' delivery not only to avert against challenges to equitable learning experiences from students who are part of ever increasing cohort sizes, but also to allow

teaching to be delivered by a flexible group of temporary staff. In addition, opportunities to adjust suggested content to the needs of learners are negated. Further, the dialogic process between student and educator becomes nullified by a different set of values, placing students and staff as 'consumers' and 'service providers'. As such, pressure will be placed on course teams within accreditation events to demonstrate how student expectations are managed; possibly through risk averse learning activities that place lessening demands for emotional labour or critical thought from students.

A subsequent international qualitative study by Davies et al. (2006) presented further detail about the effects of neo-liberal management practices on the work of academics. The research involved teachers and researchers across universities in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and the US working in science and social science. Davies et al. present differences in the ways participants' depicted higher education in the 1970s and the present neoliberal system. The findings identified advantages in the current system including, for example, increasing equity and access for students and the lessening scope for staff to be unaccountable to their colleagues and the departments in which they worked. This was weighted against factors such as reduced time for students, endless paperwork, increased bureaucracy and greater central control. The authors claimed knowledge was being dumbed down and as a consequence did not equate to the time being invested in teaching quality assessment practices. Whilst the research illustrated ways that the relationship between the state and professional groups was reconfigured in economic terms, through mobilising preferences for choice, transparency, equity and responsibility, the study did not provide any detail about ways in which academics chose to cope and portrayed staff, overall, as succumbing to new managerialist practices.

Clearly, the nature of curricula is closely related to teaching and learning. Many have argued that curricula have become bounded, rule-based entities that have become overly outcome focused. In particular, the work of Barnett made a significant contribution in offering many illuminating and critical perspectives on HE and particularly the changing nature of curricula. Barnett argued that curricula are

now characterised as outcomes based rather than subject-based outcomes (Barnett, 2000). Subsequently, Barnett and Coate (2005) raised concerns of how curriculum design was being skewed because of an undue emphasis being placed in terms of success as designated by the work environment. Whilst the coherence of education with practice is to be maintained, the authors' view was that the challenge remains that what constitutes success is being skewed in favour of risk-averse, pre-determined outcomes. The authors suggested how such a project is based on 'an engineering sense of curriculum', which, with sufficient planning and transparent specification, can overcome, in advance, any challenges raised by practice. Barnett and Coate (2005) summarised, a balance needs to be reached between enabling spaces for students to critically consider the implications of uncertain scenarios in practice, and the control of those spaces or an 'agency-structure' (Barnett and Coate, 2005:135) problem of the curriculum.

Three papers identified how curricula are at risk of being diverted by standardisation and specifications of training within allied health. For example, both Richardson (1999) from Physiotherapy, alongside Esdaile and Roth (2000) and Whiteford and Wilcock (2001) from Occupational Therapy, indicated whilst the rationale for professional standards is accepted the professions need to ensure these reflect an educative stance rather than a training based approach led by the achievement of competencies. In this respect, Richardson (1999) raised concerns that educators appeared not to have sufficiently regarded the situated nature in which learning about professional practice takes place. As a result, she argued it is tempting for students and newly qualified staff to become overly led by service driven imperatives built around a model of competence, rather than autonomous and critical practitioners.

In contrast to the above views, several studies centred on the views of academics reflected quality assurance mechanisms and forms of audit resulted in benefits (Pittilo et al. 2000; Brennan and Shah, 2000). These are briefly presented next.

The work of Pittilo et al. (2000) claimed the adoption of shared programme specifications promotes greater clarity concerning the objectives of education. This

evaluative project involving professional bodies and academics in health and social care argued for a standardised approach to programme specifications and documents associated with quality monitoring processes. Whilst this work raises some pertinent issues about furthering the ideal of a conjoint approach to external monitoring activities, the strength of the study is diluted by the descriptive presentation taken by the authors. A basis from which to assess the credibility of the project is difficult, since an outline of the methodology is lacking and views of participants are annotated and presented as overarching points.

Other studies are clearer about some of the benefits of external monitoring on teaching and learning. For example, Brennan and Shah (2000), within an international study using a case study approach across 14 countries, observed how academic audits encouraged more attention on enhancing teaching and learning within institutional agenda. However, a challenge to the credibility of this study was that case studies were self-selecting and written by the institutions themselves. Further, they were reported and presented through quality agencies of the respective countries involved and so may reflect a sanitised 'official view'. Nevertheless, the value of this research should not be diminished since it offers a useful conceptual framework with which to consider the relationship between quality management and institutional readiness for change.

Challenges to values and collegiality

Together with the potential effects on curricula and also teaching and learning, the literature demonstrates how external quality monitoring events not only evoked emotions, but also challenged the values of academic staff. Research has taken place suggesting that these responses may also influence how staff sense their own level of control, and consequently their approach overall. It was also interesting to note there were a number of discussion papers, arguing that academics need to find a different approach to deal with the demands of the quality agenda and challenges to the professional self, if scope for academic interpretation was not to become compromised.

Within one of the earliest studies exploring the implications of quality assurance initiatives within higher education, Henkel (1997) found that academics, as a result of the influences of new managerialist thinking, were finding it difficult to hold onto their values and conceptions of practice. From this qualitative international study, a critical view is presented in this paper about the apparent 'shake-up in the kaleidoscope of the discipline-institutional relationship' (1997:141). Apart from a new tier of professional services staff being established to service customer-led HE, the research highlighted ways that academics were unable to resist the advice given to them by these non-disciplinary units regarding reconceptualising their educational practice and research role. However, Henkel did not go on to offer a critique of this mismatch of values in academic staff experiences, or what alternatives might be open to staff to manage these circumstances effectively for themselves.

A case study by Newton (2000) explored the landscape of quality experienced by academics and sought to reveal implications of the emerging quality agenda, which he claimed had largely gone unexamined. The findings indicated that, largely, staff feel consumed by the processes acting on them; identifying that their experience of quality monitoring is, for instance, like a 'meaningless ritual' (2000:155) or worse, one that involved 'feeding the beast' (2000:155). Newton raised questions as to the degree of staff involvement yet indicated there was no evidence of staff empowerment. The research concluded current approaches to external quality monitoring focus on improvements in quality systems rather than in quality. In addition, the study also seemed to indicate that staff respond in a variety of ways but, overall, staff do not mutely accept the demands of the quality agenda.

A discussion exploring the ways academic staff are involved in a 'fabrications' (Ball, 2003:224), in order to seek affirmative judgements from evaluative agencies was offered by Ball (2003). Unlike much of the literature, he encouraged debate from a theoretical position, based on the work of Lyotard (1984), and developed the concept of 'performativity' as a new form of regulation. Ball argued that an outcome of performativity, is the performance(s) that individuals are required to

give, which serve as measures or 'displays' of quality. In order to navigate the circumstances raised by a 'technology of performativity' (Ball, 2003:217) individuals are required to change these representations, through using new forms of talk and presentation. Consequently, relations with students and colleagues on what it means to be a teacher become contestable since reality is unclear. Arising from these circumstances the point is made how acts of inauthenticity create costs to individuals, and from a wider perspective compromise the autonomous, ethical and professional self(ves) of teachers.

Morley (2003) also raised questions about whether quality assurance procedures, such as quality-monitoring visits connected to courses represent systems of power, and as such influence the subjectivities of staff. In Morley's study, semi-structured interviews were used to discern the views of 36 academic and administrative staff from 35 UK universities. It is difficult to evaluate the research design, since further details about the conduct of the study were not provided. What is interesting within this powerful, though politically orientated study, is how preparation for quality assessment has both social and affective consequences. The findings showed the huge impact quality assessment has on job satisfaction by raising feelings of isolation, anxiety and guilt. The research shows how participating within a culture of scrutiny presents an ontological issue for organisations since a poor judgment, arising from a monitoring visit, with several conditions is seen as degrading. Morley suggested that a strong relationship exists between reputation and identity. Consequently, she suggested that staff engage in ventriloquism within stage-managed situations. This idea was similarly expressed by McLaren (1999) in which 'schooling' is understood as a ritual performance. He claimed these rituals are symbolic of the cultural politics that surround an event.

From this recent literature and research a more critical stance to the experience of quality monitoring, such as validation events, appears to be emerging. Each of the above perspectives provides a platform to reconceptualise the concept of external monitoring practices. These studies show that understandings and, subsequently, the assessment of quality, influenced by the socio-political dynamics at play, are

constituted in certain ways. For this reason the importance of interrogating local practices, such as those connected with the approval of AHP courses, which impact on the education of future healthcare practitioners and the subsequent care of patients, is worthwhile. The final section of this chapter offers a review of existing research studies specific to this area.

Section 4: Research into the experience of external monitoring and specifically course approval processes

Research into the experiences of health and social care profession academic staff of external monitoring, and specifically of course approval processes has been limited. Indeed, subsequent to the Health Professions Order (2001) which introduced change in the regulation of AHPs and ways pre-registration education courses were approved, little has been documented. In general, the literature that exists is experience based and anecdotal in nature. Published work tends to raise issues with the changing position of the various stakeholders now involved in the accreditation and approval of courses. In addition, whilst a small number of authors have reviewed the process of course approval from the published literature, only one study raised the potential for micropolitics in approval events. The review of literature and research connected specifically to the experience of course approval events is divided into two strands: firstly, papers presenting work undertaken on a reappraisal of the process and secondly, the changing nature of stakeholders within course approval events.

Reappraising the process of course approval

Presentation of the literature in this chapter connected to external monitoring practices in HE tended to take a retrospective view. However, a review of literature specifically linked to a specific form of external monitoring impacting on health and social care courses, referred here as course approval, showed instances of alternative approaches to tackling the issue.

For example, a paper by Horsburgh (2000) reporting on an earlier qualitative study (Horsburgh, 1998) into the importance of quality monitoring processes and their

impact on student learning was illuminating. Rather than starting with a deconstruction of monitoring processes, Horsburgh highlighted factors discerned from the data that were considered as useful for staff to consider when involved within course approval preparations. Based on interviews and documentary evidence, the most important factors were a focus on professional dialogue and exchange of ideas amongst team members, leadership, student expectations, the characteristics of members' of external panels, the staff and their approach to teaching and learning, the environment, internal quality monitoring processes and resource issues. She concluded the focus should not be on systems but, instead, a collegial, dialogic process should be fostered in order to enhance the effectiveness of the process. Whilst this study provided a useful starting point for course teams in their endeavours to review a course and its curriculum the author appeared not to acknowledge and take account of the socio-political influences, which are well documented as acting on this process. Or, more, how academic staff may cope and respond to managing the dynamics of the process.

A comparison of different processes used in the course approval of similar undergraduate degree programmes was undertaken by Gerbic and Kranenberg (2003) in New Zealand. This research, using semi-structured interviews, investigated the extent to which collaboration between those involved is supported, or not, by the nature of the course approval process. Two different approval processes were identified. The first, a tabletop, paper based exercise in which reviewers of the accrediting agency, the Committee on University Academic Programmes, responded to the course team via a written report. The second, through submission of documents and meetings with a panel of reviewers, the New Zealand Qualification Authority. The findings showed that approval involving a panel meeting required much more collaboration between team members to progress the programme in more detail. As a consequence, a team ethos was developed and there was more internal ownership of the proposed course. In contrast, whilst the paper based approval was more efficient in terms of resources and led to greater impartiality by reviewers, the course team found the assessment more challenging; rather than collegial feedback for improvement, participants

believed feedback was more critical. Overall, the authors conclude that the quality of a course proposal is improved by an approval process, which includes submission of documentation and approval panel meetings with inclusion of industry experts. This study is pertinent given the recent trend in the UK for some evaluative agencies to revert to 'table-top' reviews for re-approval/accreditation of courses. Although this study provides valuable insights, details on aspects of the comparison are unclear. In addition, a further shortcoming is linked to the lack of detail relating to analysis of data and ways trustworthiness within the research is maintained.

In a related area to health, within social care services the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) commissioned an evaluation study undertaken by Lerpiniere and Kendrick (2006), into the process of course approval for Social Work education in Scotland. The announcement in 2003 of a new framework for Social Work Education precipitated the report, produced by The Scottish Institute for Residential Care. Section 54 (1) of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 conferred the responsibility for approving courses on the SSSC. This body holds a similar role to the Health Professions Council. It is possible that on learning of the pervasive effects of regulatory mechanisms from colleagues working in England and Wales, the SSSC set out to establish a more co-ordinated process, which aligned proposed validation processes with those of higher education institutions.

The study explored the perspectives of university staff, SSSC staff, and Panel Members. Data collection involved a range of methods including individual and group interviews, telephone interviews, a short questionnaire and a survey. The findings demonstrated that the requirements of universities and the SSSC still required further integration; since despite collaboration academic staff remained unclear as to how to improve courses in line with Council requirements. The study concluded panel members required appropriate training to ensure consistency of approach, further consideration by universities towards planning was required, so that clarity about expectations and mechanisms for communication are agreed. In addition, clear milestones are required in advance so that feedback is not

unnecessarily delayed. What this study therefore illustrates is that the demands of the process are still under estimated in relation to time, cost and benefits. These factors, alongside any assumptions made, need to be addressed in order for the process to deliver the outcomes required by all stakeholders involved. Despite the breadth of this report, the rationale for the research design was unsubstantiated. Two further reasons made the credibility of the report tenuous. Firstly, the capacity for the researchers' to be more direct in their recommendations is questionable given that the authors of the report are both employed by two providers of Social Work courses. Secondly, the commissioners of the report are also the lead agency for the approval process. In these circumstances, it is argued that the temptation to provide one's audience with what they want to hear exists, in order to maximise reputation and increase potential for further projects in the future (Winch, 2004).

It is clear from the above studies that research into the process of course approval within pre-registration courses is still an emerging area. Whilst this review of the literature presents course approval as a pivotal aspect within the lifespan of a course, it is clear that this area remains under theorised and further exploration is required.

The changing nature of stakeholders and implications for the approval process

One of the earliest views concerning influences on AHP courses was linked with Physiotherapy by Brooks and Parry (1985). Whilst this discussion paper was written over fifteen years ago, its history is pertinent since it highlighted the changing situatedness of AHP courses, as they began to move into HE. Even at that time, prior to regulatory change, tensions connected with centralisation between course teams and the university, and also with professional bodies were emerging. The authors argued that latitude for local interpretation of curricula and course frameworks was required. Clearly, dynamics between stakeholder groups were important in order that a consensus about what constituted approval could be reached.

A rare description indicating the change of culture within the process of validating professional degrees was provided by Hammick (1996). This paper based on authorial knowledge as a course team member and professional validator. Hammick's concern was focussed on the emergence of micropolitical activity, which she argued permeated the system of validation. Whilst the paper is not derived from the systematic collection of views or data, it raised questions at a time, prior to the Health Act (1999), when regulation of healthcare professional degrees was on the cusp of being altered. Consequently, the paper served to raise uncertainties around impending change in quality systems and the implications this may have on the practice of academics. In particular, under the new arrangements for course validation, Hammick highlighted a potential bifurcation between professional values, with those of regulatory and higher education organisations. Such papers challenge course teams to reflect on the nature of stakeholders involved in approval, and who may find themselves sidelined by new authority structures.

The area of stakeholder relationships and specifically the influence of Professional and Statutory bodies on a range of professional courses, for instance Dietetics, Nursing, Podiatry, was examined by Churchman and Woodhouse (1999) within New Zealand. The research examined the contractual relationship between government agencies, through proxies such as professional and statutory bodies, and their relationship with tertiary providers on the curricula of professional programmes. The authors used a descriptive survey circulated to 68 different agencies/bodies, anticipated to have involvement. Findings indicated that the majority of respondents believed they influenced curriculum. Regulatory or statutory bodies saw their responsibility as predominantly connected to government or society. The research seemed to indicate the latently tenuous relationship between HEIs, government and professional bodies. A central issue, the authors suggested, is reaching agreement on the purpose of professional education, which, within this paper, is reported to exist between two poles, either narrowly vocational or educationally challenging. Emphasis on the latter, the authors suggested, is vital since 'Mere competence in the current techniques and details will be only a short-term investment' (Churchman and Woodhouse, 1999:221). The paper concluded by

identifying, within the context of professional courses, the tension between accountability to government and academic freedom and that preserving a balance is likely to be fragile. Whilst the authors offered some insight into the landscape of relations between key stakeholders involved in the processes of course approval, the disadvantage with descriptive research, and the method used here was that it did not integrate well with providing an in-depth consideration of the implications from different stakeholder perspectives. Nevertheless, the findings from the study help to provide the basis for more substantive research of the area within health professional degree programmes.

More recently, Cusick and Adamson (2004) presented a discussion paper on a range of issues, which underpin the significance of accreditation processes for Occupational Therapy programmes in Australia. The stance taken by these authors is how, similar to the UK as a result of policy change, pre-registration courses are now solely reliant on a regulator for approval. An unintended consequence of this change is that professional accreditation has become an option for course teams. As a result, the authors' argued that there is potential for accreditation practices by professional bodies to become sidelined. The implications presented are that the power of the profession over its curriculum may become diluted due to predominant government influence, in addition, student numbers may dwindle for entry to non-accredited courses. Unlike other authors, Cusick and Adamson urged practitioners and educators to adopt a proactive stance in order to secure what they termed 'a bright rather than embattled future' (Cusick and Adamson, 2004:142). In summary, the paper seeks to influence the professional policy stream by urging academics to continue to support the practice of professional accreditation of courses.

Summary

Overall, the literature revealed that regulation of health professionals remains a controversial and contested aspect of research and practice. However, despite these concerns, there still remains a paucity of inquiry and debate connected to the impression created in academic lives, by forms of external monitoring. Specifically,

within the area of pre-registration AHP education, few questions have been raised as to how forms of external monitoring, such as the course approval process, affect curriculum and the practice of educators. In general, the research that has evaluated the impact of these processes largely focussed on issues associated with the mounting requirements of confining frameworks and invasive managerialist approaches. Additionally, the literature tends to focus on complications arising from the processual affects of external monitoring in practice, rather than on exploring the ways that front-line staff choose to cope. Furthermore, critique of how intended policy is realised within practice and how this journey is moderated by other players, such as the professional bodies or commissioners, is limited. In not progressing debate through inquiry, the risk is that the dominant discourse of regulation, and therefore what practices are permissible, becomes accepted.

I was interested in developing the debate. As a consequence, this study aimed to address, specifically, some of the gaps within existing AHP research. This gap became the focus of the research and informed its guiding questions, namely:

- How do staff involved with AHP pre-registration programmes experience the process of course approval?
- What are the influences on the construction and approval of AHP pre-registration courses?

In sum, the purpose of the study was to reveal some of the complexities and choices open to course teams in their participation within course approval events. At this time, few studies have explored the experiences of academic staff within this process. To date a study focussing on the course approval process which presents the experience of AHP educators holistically, and on their terms, is yet to be found. Such an aspiration calls for a different approach to those that I am familiar with, and this is presented within the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

(Wilcock, 1999:1)

Introduction

The aims of this study were to examine the experiences of staff involved in Allied Health Profession (AHP) pre-registration course approval processes; and to explore the influences on the construction and approval of AHP pre-registration courses. This chapter presents the methodology and the journey taken towards achieving the aims of the study. Through research, I wanted to move beyond the public version(s) of the approval process and provide a research-based narrative that could contribute to exploring how staff dealt with demands of the process in the future. It is important that the stories of staff through different forms of inquiry are brought to the forefront, since it is the staff that implement and shape curricula. Consequently, informed by critical and social theory traditions, this study adopted a social constructionist point of view (Burr, 2003), and was realised through narrative inquiry.

The initial thinking behind the structure of this chapter was influenced by the work of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) within narrative research, identified the presence of (at least) three kinds of voices: the narrator's voice, the theoretical framework, and reflexive monitoring. Whilst each of these three stances were integral to the making of the study, I chose to adapt Wilcock's (1999) orientation towards 'doing, being, and becoming' both as a means to structure this chapter and as a way to share my own development as a fledgling researcher.

The presentation of this chapter does not follow a conventional format, though familiar signposts of how I approached and undertook the research can be found, these are interspersed with my own narratives. The intention of including these is to convey, in an active sense, the thinking spaces particularly the uncertain ones, which I encountered in seeking to adopt a narrative approach. These 'uncertain spaces' were predominantly to do with acknowledging the contradictions I needed to deal with in reconciling my 'selves' as a newcomer to narrative research, alongside the performative culture from which I was previously familiar with from my professional life. In starting to affirm my own direction, it seemed that I had

begun to listen to the ‘still small voice’ of my own (Belenky et al. 1997:84). Such dilemmas are presented throughout this chapter, for instance, linked to choice of approach to analysis; resisting categorising data in favour of adopting integrated, inclusive methods.

The chapter is organised into three sections. The first section examines my personal stance in ‘being’ a researcher and draws out influences on realising the conceptual framework underpinning this study. The second section follows a more traditional path and presents my intended ‘doing’, in other words how I tackled the research design. Finally, the third section looks back on the study and acknowledges the troublesomeness of ‘becoming’ an inquirer during the conduct of the study, including how these concerns shaped what happened.

Section 1: ‘Being’ a researcher in contradictory spaces

In this section, I provide a critical, reflective examination of the influences I brought to the study, particularly previous professional and educational experiences, and how I tussled with these during the early stages of my doctoral journey. Starting out was far from the smooth beginning that I had anticipated. Indeed, hindsight brought the realisation that my intentions for exploring staff stories about their experience of course approval events, and my proposed thinking and action about the research design did not initially cohere. In other words, I found myself in disconcerting, contradictory spaces. Through gaining awareness of what the contradictions were, and challenging these, I was able to visualise more clearly the research proposal. Subsequently, the initial theoretical stance I chose to adopt, alongside a ‘narrative watchfulness’ was developed and has been maintained throughout the study. This first part of the journey has three landmarks: being honest and owning up to myself(s); arriving at an interchange thinking about my thinking; and the initial theoretical perspectives guiding the study.

Being honest and owning up to myself(s) as part of inquiry

Throughout this learning pathway a consistent ally has been what Barnett (1992) termed the 'critical conversation(s)' with myself. These reflective moments, helped to resolve many of the contradictory thinking spaces occupied as part of this study. I achieved this by listening for a sense of coherence across different parts of the study; coherence is an important dynamic because it links with goodness. The term goodness, as suggested by Armino and Hultgren (2002), is not only an alternative way of judging qualitative research, but also a way of 'being' as a researcher. I consider coherence to involve being open about the decisions I have taken as a researcher. These ways included making clear decisions (and struggles) on how the research questions influenced the choice in perspective for this research; thoughtfulness about harmonies between methodology, method, analysis and, most importantly, the contribution made by the participants who volunteered to be a part of this study, alongside myself.

Coming to place myself(s) within this study was difficult since it involved wrestling with numerous issues *(*Bruer and Roth, 2003). Savin-Baden and Fisher (2002) translate these issues into a commitment towards demonstrating honesties in research. The challenge of 'honesties', here, was characterised by recognising the influences from different identities I brought to the study. As Denzin (2001) suggested, researchers do not stand objectively outside of their studies but are situated locally and historically within it. Under these circumstances, I began to appreciate how I had come to perceive myself in the role of 'boundary spanner' (Leicester, 2007:80), highlighted in Chapter One. In the practice scenario of course approval my own self(s) seemed at odds; a conflict between identities as a manager-academic, educator and clinician. In many ways, this nexus provided the hook for the study. I seemed caught between the situation and choosing 'a way of being' to fit. Stronach et al (2002) explained the issue of professional identities being in flux, as a dynamic of situated performances

> …the narrator caught between stories, split between grounding narratives that offered different versions of a professional self along with tangential manifestations of a personal self
>
> (Stronach, 2002:118)

As a result, I also began to question the connections between the self(s) I brought to this study, with how my emerging identity as an educational researcher was forming. I was surprised to realise how the latter was moderated by personal and professional positions from the past and present. These circumstances led me to consider how connected to this study, AHP academic staff may unintentionally follow performative principles, rather than consider meaningful action linked to their professional values.

One of the most significant reflections for me, indicating a disconnection between espoused intention and my own thinking about the study, was highlighted early on. As I began to work on my proposal, I was encouraged to consider metaphors summarising what research meant to me. The initial images of what research represented were symbolised by notions of travel; the process of research was a journey that should be ordered and, for me, amounted to an image of the London Underground system (Appendix 2, diary entry). In the early days of working on my Research Proposal, I was fixed on finding the 'right' route to take. Feeling insecure and similar to Perry's position one, linked to dualism (Perry, 1970), where truth is understood as 'out there' and 'accepted', my thinking reverted to believing that if I worked hard and learned all the right answers all would be well. Taras (2007:56) advised the use of metaphors can produce a cognitive strait jacket from which it is extremely difficult to escape. In contrast, I found using a metaphor provided a useful mirror on my thinking and brought into view various lines of influence, which were constricting my initial attempts to gain a coherent sense of direction. At that point I realised I was so preoccupied by the busy-ness (travel) of proposing research in the field that I had neither afforded myself time for thinking about my own assumptions of 'being' a researcher nor, indeed, how my espoused theoretical values linked with what I was saying and doing. Perhaps similar to other new researchers, I was fixed on finding and following the 'right line' on which to travel.

I was saying one thing but doing another and this led to what is termed by Dewey (1910:11) a *'forked road situation'* and resulted in further reflective thinking about what I brought to this study.

Arriving at an interchange: Thinking about my thinking

At this crossroads, I reached an understanding, as Abes (2009) identified, that the theoretical perspectives guiding an inquiry can never be complete or entirely led by a set of procedures. However, if I was to fulfil the aspiration of demonstrating coherence within the inquiry, I had to overcome the threat of inertia brought on by occupying the territories of 'striving for the right answer', when at times a more confident self realised there would not be any.

Through reflecting on significant experiences and of significant others, I was mindful of the reductive, measured performances I had enacted in my role as an NHS manager. In addition, I also began to reconsider the 'training' for *doing* research I had been given as part of my own Master's project. Both of these perspectives were informed by the traditions of positivism and empiricism, each had much to do with the taken for granted technical approaches, which also bound what counted as knowledge in my work as a clinician and professional leader in practice. Such a perspective, as Crotty (2003) identified, would be value free, involve detached assessment and offer explanation. In hindsight, these orientations were somewhat ironic, given at that time my research interest was in patient and user involvement. Until then I had not really considered the affect that these experiences had. Following the work of Wright Mills (1940), I may have, unknowingly, been conditioned for certain lines of conduct since I had not appreciated the pervasive effect that these experiences had on me. I realised I was falling for what Harré (1981:8) termed the urge towards 'the myth of certainty' or, in my case, reverting to preferred ways of doing, as projected here. The latter was demonstrated at the time by the concerns I had with the exactness of using appropriate terms to blend with my chosen paradigm. Subsequently, I was to realise that in following an interest in narrative inquiry there was to be no straight answer.

Due to the nature of the theoretical perspectives guiding the research, I found myself in 'borderland spaces' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). I took from the above exploration that it was only through 'standing aside of the map' and being able to reflect on the wider context in which this study and myself are situated that the choices available in designing the research would become more accessible. I agreed with Lincoln (1997) when she suggested that the concept of choice in research is a powerful one. Choice here, then, involved making my intentions plain and included deliberations about settling on the theoretical perspectives of this inquiry.

As I reconsidered my own experiences in the past, as a lecturer, and contrasted these with my duties as a manager-academic, I recollected some of the creative ideas we held as a course team. Yet, alongside these thoughts were also memories of how meeting the requirements of stakeholders, with evidence of how these were met, had now become paramount. As I attempted to fit both of these differing views into a whole picture, I also began to question the role of wider influences, including stakeholders, within the process. As I reflected on this scenario of course approval, I understood that discerning a view based on individual experiences alone would not allow me to get 'a fix' on the wholeness of the subject matter to hand. Instead, it seemed a broader, inclusive perspective was needed and the position of my initial question changed from illuminating experiences (the what) of course approval to also exposing 'how' the surrounding contexts, and those involved, influenced what happened in the process. As a result, I believed that my initial worldview of a knowable reality had shifted. In this way, as Darlaston-Jones (2007:19) suggested, 'reality is the same for you as it is for me and by adopting a scientific approach we can see that shared reality'. Indeed such a perspective presumes the researcher knows what is important at the outset, assuming that what is known can be generalised. I believed this view limited possibilities for inquiry. From my own perspective I was not seeking to learn what the 'truth' was of course approval events but what accounts of it existed, how these were created, by whom and for what purposes. Based on my background of working as a healthcare

professional it would not have been unusual to have chosen a deductive perspective to generate what was viewed as ‘significant’ data.

However, I followed Holloway and Jefferson’s (2000) opinion that, whilst surveys may be appropriate in order to quantify ‘measurable factors’, they may neglect to illuminate motives for events and underlying meanings. Whilst such an approach might reveal, for example, the number of course approval events staff have been involved in and how this differs by grade, it would not reveal what the process meant to them beyond the act of approving a course. As discussed in section three of this chapter I was, at the start, sufficiently naive to believe that I could equally apply other ‘defined’ approaches such as grounded theory and a specific form of structured narrative analysis to provide the clear 'sense-making' I needed. Subsequently, I learned that clear accounts of how to analyse narrative are not only rare, some may be equally reductive (Squire, 2008). Whilst my intention may be understood as utopian, I aimed for participants to retain their agency and suppress the ordering of stories in both the telling and retelling of them. What seemed central was that staff appeared to make sense of their experience in approval events, through their talk about it. Therefore, I sought an orientation that would encompass the ‘situatedness’ of this study and how these circumstances might influence the practice of academics, alongside the choices they made regarding their involvement in approval activities.

I believed that those involved would be able to collaborate in the study by choosing to share what was important to them. As Armino and Hultgren (2002:451) explained, ‘epistemological assumptions represent a belief system, not merely something someone does’. A priority was the choice of theoretical orientation(s) which would support a holistic perspective of individual experiences, the ways individuals’ perceived the involvement of others and possible futures. The aim of collaboration with participants would only be realised through the sensitive use of informal and creative ways ‘with’ them rather than traditional, formal methods ‘on and about’ them. These concerns led to the initial identification of theoretical

perspectives, which I believed were important in supporting the intentions of a narrative inquiry.

The initial theoretical perspectives guiding the study

I was initially interested in adopting the theoretical perspective of social constructionism. Crotty (2003:58) explained, 'social constructionism emphasises the hold our culture has on us: its shapes the way in which we see things and gives us a quite definite view of the world'. This perspective might be applied to how experiences of course approval are understood by AHP academics and how these are shaped by the cultural context(s) surrounding them. In my work, I wanted to explore how various versions of events were created and to identify significant people and organisations involved. This orientation opposes essentialism, which, according to Giroux (2000), assumes identity is fixed, difference can be erased and people induced to believe that occurrences are naturally that way.

Instead, social constructionism provides a basis to address the context and individual locations of staff in course approval. Inquiry with a social constructionist focus encourages, as Gergen (1985:266) suggested, 'explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain or otherwise account for the world in which they live'. Meanings, then, are created and mediated through a collective response. The concept of collectiveness is reflected in Schwandt's (1994:127) opinion that social constructionism involves 'the collective generation of meaning as shaped by conventions of language and other social processes'. In this study, social constructionism provided the lens through which to interpret how academics considered the language and actions of others (stakeholders) who constitute the collective, including the means that staff use to navigate these interactions. For Gergen (1985) these interactions are known as 'Influencing Dynamics', where understandings of reality are characterised by ongoing exchanges through conversation and stories shared. In this context, the possibilities for multiple realities can be considered. My focus was on accessing these realities and on trying to understand the sense made by academic staff of course approval events.

Burr (2003) outlines four key assumptions underpinning social constructionism that harmonise with the intentions of this study.

1. *Social constructionism encourages a critical stance, in relation to the 'taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world' (Burr, 2003:2).* The position I take is that educators within course teams need to begin by troubling with the certainties of regulation and the affects created in professional curricula through, as Burbules (2000:314) recommended, an education of 'aporias', of thinking again about matters we assumed settled.

2. Social constructionists assume 'all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative' (Burr, 2003:4). Here, I sought to explore and elicit the micropolitical environment surrounding course approval events. Additionally, this assumption reflected my position. Since I considered myself to be offering alternative ways of seeing things rather than suggesting there is only one way, or that my ways are necessarily better than others.

3. *Within social constructionism, knowledge takes a variety of forms and integrated together with social action in turn invites certain actions but excludes others. These circumstances are based on the idea that constructions of the environment around us are bound through power relations dictating what is permissible (Burr, 2003).* This assumption guided the study in two directions. Primarily, my intentions focused on capturing how educators experience agency and whether this was promoted or inhibited within current processes. In addition, I hoped to encourage a relationship with participants such that understandings were arrived at through a journey of co-construction. This differs from a post-positivist epistemological position where power remains with the researcher and, as Gubrium and Holstein (1998:164) proposed, participants become 'communicative puppets' in the production of data.

4. *The final assumption of social constructionism is associated with how knowledge is passed on and sustained within communities. Burr (2003:4) explained how social constructionists believe people construct knowledge between themselves and it is through interaction with each other that newer versions of knowledge are devised.* Here, I was interested to discern whether, dependent on where participants were located, different views regarding the future of course approval and curriculum review might exist.

Whilst I believed gaining understandings of the approval process would be guided through a social constructionist lens, I wanted to ensure that I did not simply provide an account. I still held questions linked to the dynamics between those involved in approval, in which some groups were 'seemingly' in a privileged position to decide what was to constitute approval or accreditation. As Knafo (2008:3) observes, it is one thing to say that an institution is socially constructed, but it does not answer the question of 'how' it is being constructed. As I perceived it, each approval event was unique, yet opened multiple interpretations depending on where one stood. I wanted to know why things had come to be this way, and what action or ways of thinking sustain current practice. I realised I sought to do more than describe the realities of participants.

Subsequently, I also identified myself with Kinchloe and McLaren's (2005) definition of a critical researcher as someone who was seeking ways to irritate sources of power and provide insights into what is considered as certain. Much has been documented about how critical theorists reject the claim that institutional structures are neutral or apolitical (Apple, 1996; Gerwitz, 2000, Giroux, 2003). Indeed, I questioned the effects of external monitoring currently being used to approve courses. The fundamental principle underpinning the philosophy of critical theory, according to Fulton (1997), is that no aspect of social phenomena can be comprehended unless it is related to the history and structure in which it is located. Initially, Habermas's theories were useful, particularly because his ideas do not exclusively involve the evaluation of prevailing circumstances, but also suggest possibilities for being hopeful, to make choices about the ways educators think and

act in practice. Particularly, Habermas's theory of knowledge interests (Habermas, 1972) provided a means to analyse the local circumstances of approval at course level through his proposal concerning the influence of knowledge interests.

In this study, I understood these interests or influences as three dynamics: practical, technical and emancipatory (Habermas, 1972). This initial representation is illustrated in Appendix 3. At this early point in the study I understood that participants' experience were open to the interests surrounding course approval events. Initially, my thoughts were that course approval represented a form of ecology, which if balanced would temporarily function effectively. Whilst this idea raised the possibility for change, it posed several limitations, which are discussed in Chapter Nine. Nevertheless, I anticipated that through following critical and social theory traditions insight into how social constructions may favour certain interests leading to constraints in decision making would be revealed. I was interested to discover how staff might be socialised to accept the current process of course approval events and whether any of them were resisting it. In sum, I sought to comment on what appeared to be the instrumental, uni-dimensional processes of approval and the use of methods that seemed geared towards 'process efficiency' rather than 'purpose effectiveness' alongside the contrast of the dialogic, creative and relational qualities of curriculum review.

Section 2: Navigating and 'doing' the study

The second section of this chapter presents the contours of the methodology and the specifics of the intended research design. Overall, it provides an account of my plans at the start of the study. In the final section of this chapter, Section Three, I provide a reflection upon the significant issues, which arose in relation to the plan during the conduct of the study. This reflection also includes insights into my role as a researcher.

Clarifying the questions to be asked

Influenced by my chosen stance of critical social constructionism, I was interested in identifying the experiences of academics and discovering ways those involved adapted to the influences shaping what could be. As the inquiry developed, as already discussed in the previous section, the research question broadened out from one illuminating participants' experience of AHP course approval events, to also exploring how these were located socially. From this perspective and based on the earlier literature review, two questions arose, namely:

1. **How do AHP academic staff experience course approval events?**
2. **What are the influences on the construction and approval of pre-registration AHP courses?**

The dimensions of the above questions are reflected in two aims underpinning the research:

- To examine the experiences of staff involved in AHP pre-registration course approval processes, as a part of overall external monitoring;
- To explore the influences on the construction and approval of AHP pre-registration courses.

Narrative research and the design of this inquiry

To fulfil the aims of the research, I chose a narrative inquiry approach. Here, narrative inquiry illuminates the individual narratives of those involved against a backdrop of contextualised practices within the space of course approval to form a 'situated interpretation' (Josselson, 2006:6). My purpose was to show the complexities of how AHP academic staff participated within the process of course approval, whilst also locating the event itself amongst the environmental contexts surrounding it.

Unlike any research that I had done before, narrative inquiry did not present any 'routine' places to start. Furthermore, the 'historically-produced theoretical bricolage' commonly informing a narrative approach (Squire et al. 2008) made clarity concerning how to conceptualise what is narrative, and reasons for its importance, challenging. Polkinghorne (1995:6) maintained that 'narrative' includes 'any data that are in the form of natural discourse or speech'. More specifically, Chase (2005) highlighted, narratives may resemble a short descriptive account; an extended story the teller observed or participated within about something of significance associated with a particular event. Here, I understood participants' narratives to be talk or writing organised around significant events; relating to the past, present and future and prompted through conversation, interviews and responses to other media, such as symbolic objects.

In order to make my position clear I based the use of narrative within this study on three assumptions, which are summarised in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: The Link between assumptions about narrative research and design of this inquiry

Assumptions on which the research design is based:	**Link to research questions**	**Implications for research design**
1. People understand and maintain their lives through the use of narratives	What are the patterns of practice, and stakeholder perceptions of these, within the journey of curriculum construction and approval?	Participants can make sense of events through talk or the re-telling of stories about significant or consequential circumstances
2. Narratives form an integral part of life, people shape these to enable their own goals; at the same time their own narratives are exposed to influences external to themselves	How do governance structures surrounding the regulation of health professionals and higher education institutions shape the review and approval of allied health professional undergraduate curricula?	Through talk, participants' may describe significant 'others' including the actions of individuals, and discourse that has become enmeshed within their own narratives, for instance, reproduction of policy rhetoric.
3. Narratives may provide an insight into people's identities, how these are enacted over time and what they may become	How does stakeholder experience of curriculum construction and approval influence educational practice and professional identities? What 'preferred' stories of curriculum review and approval exist amongst stakeholders, which may be of use in the future?	Participants experiencing conflict may use metaphorical devices as a means to represent the 'untellable'. They also might use language to explain their own action that can demonstrate ways identity is shown and used in events.

The first assumption is based on a belief within narrative research that individuals live through 'storied lives' (Bruner, 1986). These stories provide a means to access understandings of how knowledge is organised based on experiences and, as a result, what this means in certain circumstances, its meaning and current use. The

assumption here is that participants make sense of their actions, and those of others, through narratives. It seems, as identified by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, Zilber (1998), that people are storytellers by nature. As a result, one of the most accessible ways of learning about experience is by asking people to share their stories of it. Particularly, I was interested to capture significant events, termed by Elbaz (1991:17) 'critical episodes'. Significant events within participant narratives were characterised by situations that raised queries or gave rise, for instance, to feelings of unease or unexplained satisfaction.

The second assumption on which this research design was based is informed by the work of Gergen (1985), who proposed that individuals may shape stories for their own purpose and that influences shaping these stories need to be recognised. Particularly, within the AHP approval process, the use of language forms the basis of events. Since this inquiry is influenced by critical theory, I was interested in, as Richardson (2002:415) highlighted that, 'no textual staging is ever innocent'. Therefore, in this instance it was not just a case of stories or narratives being shared but, in fact, how stories in use construct a 'reality' of the approval process by, and for, those involved. Whilst I accept narratives do not transparently reflect reality, as Ferber (2000) highlighted, the meaning attributed to participants' experience may be demonstrated through stories. As a consequence, the activity of story sharing by staff may provide a conduit for their own voice about a process that is commonly understood as predetermined.

The third assumption is based on the notion that narratives involve a representation of individuals' recollection of past events and actions and from these a perspective about their identities may emerge. Such recollections, Riessmann (1993) suggested, may often occur when there has been a breach between the ideal and the real. The process of course approval incurs a temporal dimension, in this instance, possibly the idea that events and milestones within the approval process are in designated places and realised in a linear fashion. Though a straightforward path might be commonly expected, what has not been accounted for is the history that participants bring to the practice of approval. Consequently, the means of claiming

voice or agency in the event becomes an interaction between the beliefs of individuals and their experiences of past and present voices (Moen, 2006). Therefore, scope for misconstruction can exist between participants' expectations of the process and its current order in terms of intentions, motives and values of both. Wright Mills (1959:5) proposed that through understanding the whole context people may better understand the existing situation and able 'to gauge their own fates'. In addition, linked to this study, participants perhaps through participating in this research may choose to re-story their own future involvement in approval processes.

Choice of place and sampling

Due to the complexity of stakeholders involved in AHP course approval, I chose to manage the scope of this study by focussing on gaining the views of staff within one UK higher education institution providing pre-registration AHP courses. The reasons for this were:

- By concentrating on one site, I aimed for an in-depth, rich, contextualised account of experience.
- Whilst I did not intend to generalise from this study, I believed this site was similar to other providers since all pre-registration AHP programmes are located within a UK university, offering at least two pre-registration AHP courses.
- Though I recognised the culture of course teams and the organisations in which they work are unique, in this instance, all pre-registration courses are subject to the same processes for (re)approval by the HPC, alongside similar arrangements for the external monitoring of quality and funding.

Within the chosen location, I sought to undertake a cross sectional approach (Maxwell, 1996) involving academic staff from three different disciplines: Dietetics, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. Following Patton (2002) I adopted an intensity sampling approach; my intention was to seek potential volunteers, all of

whom had experience of the phenomenon yet occupied different positions in their experience of it. Such a decision, I anticipated, would provide a breadth of perspectives. I assumed that the protocols and milestones involved in AHP course approval processes would be similar. My particular interest was on the positionality of participants; whether patterns of experience were similar or unique amongst academics, whether as lecturers or manager-academics. In addition, I also sought views from colleagues working within professional bodies with a lead for education in these courses, and members from teams of staff supporting quality assurance processes in higher education institutions. This study did not include the voice of the Regulator or the Health Professions Council, not because they do not deserve attention but because the focus of this study is on the experience of AHP academics. In addition, it was unlikely that any of their officers would be involved in their official capacity.

Ethical approval, plans to negotiate access and consent

Before any action was taken to seek volunteers for the study, I applied and successfully obtained ethical approval from the institution at which I was a student, for both the proposed pilot study, and the main study. In addition, ethical approval was successfully received from the research site itself and this also included local gatekeepers, the heads of departments.

As a healthcare professional whose practice is guided by an ethical value base I felt, as Pring (2000) identified, ethical conduct within this inquiry did not just centre on approval granted by a committee, but required vigilance throughout the whole journey. Whilst my approach was far from, as Small (2001) warned against, following ‘a template that institutionalises’ I was conversant with the ‘Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research’ by BERA (2004). From the outset, the following principles underpinned my intentions in this study:

- To enable the free and informed consent of volunteers;

- To maintain confidentiality and anonymity of participants and the host institution;
- To enable collaboration between participants and myself;
- To do justice to the information shared by participants;
- To avoid the likelihood of harm with a focus on beneficence at all times.

Earlier, an outline was given regarding how I believed that due to my previous experience as a participant and lead for preparing a course for approval, these insights would inform the study. Consequently, I realised that I was not only the researcher but also the researched, as a researcher on the inside. The position of becoming an 'insider researcher' (Smyth and Holian, 2008) meant that I needed to develop ethical sensitivity in a range of circumstances. How I managed these issues during the conduct of the study is explored in Section Three.

Facilitating interactional moments through interview conversations

As I contemplated the nature of participants' involvement I wanted to move away from what Schwab (1978) termed, a 'stable inquiry' with fixed questions and intentions, to a more co-constructed place with participants. Consequently, I placed emphasis on an 'inter-view', a view between two people in conversation regarding something of joint concern. Similar to what Kvale (1996:2) summarised as 'an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest'. This aim was in contrast to a traditional research interview, commonly characterised as a uni-directional meeting in which the researcher largely directs the entire exchange.

The work of Mishler (1991) influenced how I thought about participant roles and methods to involve them. Mishler (1991:35) redefined interviewing as being a 'speech event' where participants are encouraged to share narratives as part of a conversation. My purpose was to achieve a dialogue with participants and to avoid, what Ellis and Berger (2002) warned against, an interrogation. In order to

encourage recipricocity and the sharing of narratives I adopted similar characteristics to those described by Riley and Hawe (2004:228):

- flexibility to allow the conversation to take different directions;
- capacity for adjustment to suit the conditions of the meeting and the role of the person interviewed;
- demonstration of empathy towards participants in their experience of course approval events;
- encourage active participation in the interpretation of what they shared;
- trust within the relationship by maintaining confidentiality of participants and the departments in which they worked.

Later in this chapter, I appraise these strategies. In particular, I was to discover that I had not accounted for the underlying challenges that the 'interchange' of views would present. For instance, how a participant might use their position.

Pilot study

As I felt unfamiliar with the style of interview conversations, I chose to make the purpose of the pilot study an evaluation of whether this less structured method would be effective in gathering in-depth accounts. Whilst I was used to working with clients as a therapist, I was concerned whether this method would produce accounts that related to the research question. In order to fulfil the requirements of ethical approval and as a useful prop for myself, I was required to develop an interview/ topic guide (Appendix 4). Being a novice researcher, I found the question prompts comforting, particularly as participants were not only knowledgeable regarding the style and topic of this study, but also held senior positions in academic departments different to those identified for the main study.

Anxiety concerning my capacity to engage the participants was unfounded since each provided valuable feedback regarding how the conversational style had engendered a reflective approach. Both sets of participants believed this was

helpful in discussing a phenomenon, which, in the recounting of it, did not just include a retelling of the experience but led to a view regarding their own position(s) in it. Additionally, their transcripts provided a wealth of significant events that prompted further discussion and affirmation in a follow-up meeting. However, the pilot confirmed the lengthy nature of interview conversations and that the proposed number of participants would be too many to do justice to the data. Rather than negate my initial plan of including representatives of professional bodies and staff involved in quality, I still chose to include them but changed the emphasis to view these individuals as strategically orientated representatives. This decision enabled me to foreground the parts played by academics as lead sources in this story and place the conversations of representatives working in professional bodies and higher education quality organisations as a part of the surrounding context.

Addressing the 'goodness' of this inquiry

Within this inquiry, I did not view the narratives that participants chose to share with me as 'raw data'. Instead, I believed the narratives shared by the teller(s) were the outcome of their interpretative practices and influenced by the environmental contexts surrounding them. This perspective created a series of tenuous personal reflections concerning narrative research, as Barone (2007) asked, about how to make the study 'worthy'. The ways in which I aspired to demonstrate the quality of this narrative inquiry, are discussed next.

The nature of validity in narrative research

Traditionally, judgment concerning the quality of research has been led by the positivist paradigm, associated with definitive measures of truth. A significant issue for this study was its validity since, in narrative research, each encounter or story is unique to the participant and researcher and, consequently, is context dependent (Holloway and Freshwater, 2007). As a result, narrative research has received criticism for being overly anecdotal, such that the views of participants can be deceptive due to the influences of time, poor memory and subjective experience (Holloway and Freshwater, 2007). Initially, to overcome these challenges, I found

myself neatly mapping methods within the Research Proposal to assure quality (Appendix 5). Again, I was utilising measures from a fixed, knowable environment within a reality that consists of 'narrative truths (that) are always partial-committed and incomplete' (Clifford, 1986:7). Consequently, I found the nature of validity and reliability troublesome, as I explain next.

In reconsidering the worldview adopted within this study, I understood that participants' narratives could not be viewed as direct representations of experience. I took narratives to involve a dynamic process of sense-making by individuals and that this was influenced by encounters within different contexts. As Conle (2000:57) remarked 'truth' can only be considered "from the teller's vantage point at a particular time of the inquiry". Therefore, recollections shared by participants were not considered as "an exact record of what happened" (Riessman, 1993:64) nor as a direct reflection of approval events and their preliminary preparations, but as constitutive of a particular view of reality. I therefore appreciated Gudmundsdottir's (1996) point, that narrative can offer a partial view of the participant's reality, never the whole story. As an 'inquiry guided' study, the standard approach to validity was inappropriate. Due to the socially constructed perspective of this study, reality and the arising narratives were not considered as static or homogenous. As Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006) highlighted, the process for establishing merit in narrative research is not on the same basis as quantitive studies, so it is reasonable to suggest the basis of criteria for judging the quality of research grounded in different epistemologies will also be different. As a result, I sought other perspectives that would accommodate the unique, relational nature of inquiry between participants' and inquirer (Lincoln 1995).

Accommodating quality as 'goodness' within this inquiry

Alternative ways for judging the quality of narrative inquiry have been well-documented (Mishler 1991; Denzin, 1994; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, Zilber, 1998). I was specifically influenced by Armino and Hultgren (2002), who used the term 'goodness' as a means of signifying a move away from traditional terms such as

'rigour' linked to validity and reliability. The concept of goodness enables a language of situatedness, trustworthiness and authenticity (Armino and Hultgren, 2002). Similar to Ballinger's (2006:240) 'considerations for evaluation', I kept in mind four overarching considerations concerning the quality of this study.

Coherence

I refer to demonstrating 'a sense' of coherence by clearly outlining my theoretical perspective of social constructionism with critical theory. Specifically, how these have supported a commitment towards a narrative research methodology. I have aimed to be open regarding the values and experiences I brought to this research, ways these have been challenged, and how a changed perspective kindled the research question itself. In relation to my role, I realised that my view is privileged and at the same time I did not believe it was the only one. Consequently, the language I have used is attentive to the negotiated nature of meaning monitored by the parallel dialogue of self-reflection.

Evidence of systematic and careful research conduct

Clarity regarding the use of methods was clearly documented. In addition, use of interview conversations provided the opportunity for participants to lead the co-construction of meanings surrounding course approval events within this inquiry. Although the interview conversations were the primary source, over reliance on one method was avoided by referring to other types of data including policy statements, organisational procedures from statutory bodies, field texts generated from observations and extracts from my research diary. Prolonged contact with the participants was important as it helped establish the essence of an inclusive relationship; detailed consideration of the approach to analysis, leading on to interpretation, was given.

Convincing and relevant interpretation

I worked hard at enabling the interpretation to cohere with the social constructionist influences from the theoretical perspective of the study. This has been demonstrated by providing an interpretation that accommodates both individual and contextual perspectives. Fulfilling the intended approach has become a way of 'being' in the study rather than enlisting sets of criteria.

Practically, interpretation was supported by careful attention to detail in description, location of quotes and resisting over-interference with the data. Other, similar, studies were identified and evaluated in the light of this inquiry. The process of member checking in narrative research is challenging. Rather, I strived for resonance or a sense of 'verisimilitude' (Holloway and Freshwater, 2007) such that when participants read their narrative they should at least appear to be truthful, and resemble their experience. In addition, feelings of association, and comments, demonstrating resonance between the findings of this research, and the experience of readers or listeners has been demonstrated at the conferences where I have presented aspects of this work. Rather than triangulation, the process of crystallisation (Richardson, 1994:522) is shown by a cumulative approach to interview conversations and analysis, capturing similar reflections across participants' narratives and comparing the interpretation with the literature.

Role of the researcher

Throughout each stage, I have attempted to provide an honest account of the struggles and contradictions experienced in developing the study. Insights into dilemmas as a researcher have been identified through consistent meetings with my research supervisor, reciprocity in feedback with participants on their involvement and documenting reflections within my research diary. Importantly, my role has focussed on the guiding principle of beneficence and involved ensuring informed consent alongside, as practicable, the confidentiality and anonymity of staff and the organisations in which they work.

The final section of this chapter moves on to examine my reflection on 'becoming' an inquirer, the dilemmas which I faced during the conduct of the study and how I dealt with these.

Section 3: Reflections on 'becoming' an inquirer

The final part of this chapter reflects on the dilemmas I had in moving into an inquiry space that was less fixed than I had been used to, but more open and inclusive. As I encountered each aspect of the study, I seemed to be living through a series of contradictions. These contradictions were reflected in several instances of oppositional thinking which appeared at various places and connected to both the formal and informal ethical basis of the study. The predicaments that emerged were linked to becoming an insider researcher, the unexpected power relation between some of the participants and myself, sensitively dealing with organisational politics and realising a coherent perspective on which to base interpretative analysis.

Managing the dilemma of accessing participants

I sought volunteers following ethical approval and permission by the respective institutional gatekeepers and committees. My situation was that of someone who was familiar with the university environment and the practices of course approval. As such, following Sikes and Potts (2008), I could be considered as a 'research(er) on the inside'; though some writers, for example Morse (1998), have strong views on the detrimental role of becoming a researcher who was familiar with the research context. From my own experience, I found this position provided both challenges as well as benefits. A primary issue related to accessing potential volunteers for the study.

Due to my knowledge of the research site I had prior information of where likely volunteers were located, and of possible systems that I could use in order to access them. I reflected carefully on this contentious position and the impact on access to potential volunteers, which may leave individuals within the three AHP course teams feeling coerced. To avoid making direct approaches to people, following

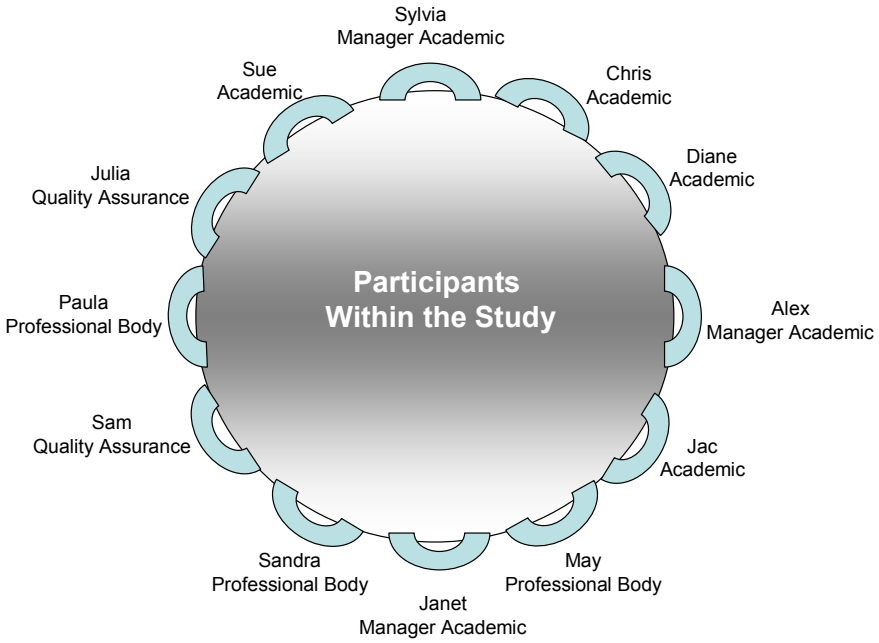
written consent from each of the Heads of Department, participation was invited by making initial contact through utilising group-wide email addresses covering each of the three departments. The email provided an overview of the purpose of my research and an invitation to contact me if staff wished to volunteer (Appendix 6). These actions allowed me to openly and equally access potential volunteers and send messages individually. Furthermore, my professional background was out with two of the AHP departments I had chosen to involve. Additionally, where my profession was the same as staff within one of the departments, I did not have any line management responsibility for them. In addition, within the scope of the research questions and aims of the study disciplinary differences of the course approval process were not focussed upon, therefore, any professional pre-understanding would be reduced.

I felt privileged to receive a high number of replies requesting involvement, including three heads of department and 16 staff who were principal/senior lecturers (PL/SL). The level of response might be due to several reasons; however, I assumed an important reason was that the last course approval event had concluded recently. Due to the response, it was enticing to reconsider my choice of methods, for instance, changing to focus groups in order to involve more people. However, I was thoughtful of the drawbacks of this method and the intentions of this study. I was interested in how participants' meanings emerged and so I believed simulated focus groups would be insufficient. Also due to the degree of control held by the facilitator within a focus group, including the conventions in which these are commonly conducted, this method would no longer support the intended conversational exchange I had hoped for (Berg, 2001). Apart from these practical issues, I was also particularly concerned about the power dynamics within a mixed group of staff. As Kanuka (2010) identified, participant involvement using this method can become compromised through an individual's discomfort in sharing personal opinions in front of others. Furthermore, if senior staff were present their views may predominate such that more junior staff may be reticent to contribute. I

reviewed the values underpinning this inquiry alongside the sampling strategy and made the decision to remain with individual interview conversations.

Informed by access to course approval panel membership lists, of those who had volunteered, I identified within each chosen department names of all head of department grades, and staff identified with a lead role for their course approval event. At this stage, I found that not all professions with staff holding a specific lead role were included. However, shortly after the first set of interview conversations had begun, a member of staff from this course team volunteered and I decided to include them. Each of the volunteers received an electronic Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 7) and a Consent Form (Appendix 8) with an invitation to contact me if they wished to continue. I received affirmative replies from all seven academics I approached and arranged the initial interview conversations. Times and places to meet were identified at the convenience of participants; some chose to meet in their offices, others requested I find a location elsewhere. In addition, I contacted all the staff not chosen and thanked them for their interest in the study. I made contact, by email, with key informants of the three respective professional bodies and those working in areas supporting quality in higher education. All five people agreed to be involved and I followed this up with a telephone conversation, forwarding the same Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form to them. In sum, the study was supported by 12 participants. Their pseudonyms and background are identified in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Participants involved in the study



Reviewing the experience of interview conversations

As Denzin (2001) recommended, I aimed to capture the location and situation of participants' on their own terms. Each meeting began with an open, introductory question inviting people to tell me about how they came to work in HE. I used this opening in order to encourage participants to enter into conversation in their own way and avoid homogenising experiences by re-situating themselves. I was mindful of how Mishler (1991) proposed that involvement of participants is framed implicitly by the wording and form of questions used. Next, I moved on to ask an open story-telling question, 'Can you recall when you first started talking about course approval and what happened next?' Within the meetings, similar to Rogan and de Kock (2005), I used other conversational techniques, for instance:

- Making open comments
- Using ways of 'reflecting back' to clarify meanings
- Supporting participants by sharing my own personal stories
- Negotiating meaning through spontaneous questions
- Encouraging new perspectives
- Responding to their questions and conversational leads

Table 3.2 summarises the participants involved and how many interview conversations I undertook with each person

Table 3.2 Summary of participants and interview conversations

Participant	Role	Number of interview conversations
Alex	Manager-Academic	2
Chris	Academic	2
Diane	Academic	2
Jac	Academic	2
Janet	Manager-Academic	2
Julia	HEI Quality Team	1
May	Professional Body Representative	2
Paula	Professional Body Representative	2
Sam	HEI Quality Team	1
Sandra	Professional Body Representative	2
Sue	Academic	2
Sylvia	Manager-Academic	2

As I sought to reduce the power I had in these meetings in directing what was included, this meant opportunities for shaping the scope of the conversation were controlled largely by each participant. In making this decision, I was unprepared for the overlay of emotion and the seemingly disempowered positions that some staff experienced in course approval events. Whilst Josselson (2007) identified that effective expression is a sign that participants are comfortable enough to relax their defences, I was also wondering how this might influence what became 'tell-able' later. However, in some instances what emerged were the ways in which some participants used different ways to present themselves through their talk, as explained next.

Chris, who was an AHP like myself, participated in the first interview conversation. As a result, I anticipated that it might be easier, yet this was not the case. Throughout the conversation, Chris made considerable use of metaphor to express feelings. Whilst it was not my intention to undertake discourse analysis, I was aware of what Wooffitt (2005) termed, 'externalising devices'; this feature of speech identified to the listener the existence of something other than that which the teller is directly speaking of. For instance, through use of metaphor Chris signalled that the 'system' seemed to be devouring colleagues in real terms, "*…it's part of the system we are in. And do we accept that, or do we, or does it eat away at ours, or do we eat way at it?'* As I reflected, it was almost as if another channel or voice had been chosen. What disarmed me was the capacity for metaphor to reveal a world in which Chris seemed overwhelmed.

Similarly, another member of staff, Sue, made frequent use of metonyms. Savin-Baden and Van Niekerk (2007), in referring to their work within narrative inquiry, define metonymy as where the name of something is substituted for an attribute of it. For example, Sue refers to *'an all mother of a module'* when she was describing the consequences of moving to a 20 credit modular framework that she believed sometimes led to larger modules being formed and enveloped by other material. Clearly, I had begun to analyse what I thought was happening. From my viewpoint,

perhaps this figurative use of narrative indicated some of the ways in which the identities of participants became embodied and positioned in this study. This idea is further developed within the data analysis chapters.

Another assumption I made concerning the use of interview conversations, which surprised me, was that I had presumed each person would enter into this 'shared endeavour', with a story to tell. I take story to be a form of narrative. Referring to Denzin (2001:59):

> A story has a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Stories have basic structural features, including narrators, plots, settings, characters, crises and resolutions.

Yet, it seemed for some participants, particularly for those who were in manager-academic roles, our initial meetings lacked spontaneous talk. I found this challenging, since whilst I was mindful of what might be 'storyworthy' (Chase 2005) it would have been easy, in order to elicit a response, to lead with some of my own stories concerning course approval events. In my first meeting with Sylvia, the flow of the conversation gave me the impression that she was reluctant to share her personal reflections on experiences of course approval. It looked as if Sylvia did this by creating pauses and waiting for me to ask a question of her. Nevertheless, she provided me with an extremely informative view on the purpose of curriculum review processes, approval events and ways these were managed within her academic department. Likewise, another experienced academic, Alex, created a sense of reluctance to discuss thoughts. For instance, in our conversation Alex seemed careful to demarcate to me which 'role' was being 'performed' in the conversation at any time. Alex signalled this through comments such as: *'… it was from a very personal perspective…*' and *'a personal perspective here as opposed to my role…'* alternatively, '*this is you know, in terms of my role here, this is how it is at the moment…'*.

In seeking to afford participants the opportunity to control, at least partially, the meanings of what they had shared, as Mishler (1991) recommended, I undertook in

most instances (Table 3.2) two interview conversations with each of the participants. I was concerned how the second interview conversation might begin, so I decided to invite staff to bring along something that summed up what course approval events meant; this could be a picture, an object, a written reflection or anything that had meaning for them. The result was 22 interview conversations were completed in all.

Challenges with equipment leading to new threads of thinking and beginnings of analysis

The enthusiasm of participants to talk about their experiences guided the duration of each meeting. On average, each conversation lasted 90 minutes. Although I made notes in preparation, during and after the meetings in my research diary, I was pleased also to have the support of a digital recorder. As Hermanowicz (2002) recommended, it is impractical for researchers to attempt to recall the entirety of narratives. Each recording was reproduced into a transcript or 'fieldtext'. Here I adopt a Clandinin and Connelly (1994:419) term, where fieldtexts are created from the conversation. Each of the fieldtexts resembled the conversation as closely as possible, and presented in a similar format to a play (Appendix 9). Mindful of Mishler's (1991:48) advice that transcripts can only ever be a 'partial representation of what "actually" happened'. In addition, whatever decision is taken for re-representation this should be in line with the aims of the study. Consequently, I did not seek to parse or segment the text because, as explained subsequently, my interest was in the holistic-content of the conversation. I felt this decision was in line with the purpose and approach intended for the study.

In all cases, except two, the recordings went smoothly. However, on one occasion, the recording became undecipherable due to electrical interference and in this case, fortunately, the participant (Paula) kindly agreed to another conversation. With a later case (May) the recording was accidently erased when preparing for another meeting. I realised this was shoddy practice on my part. As it would have been difficult to re-arrange the meeting with this participant and having explained the situation to her I chose, as faithfully as possible, to recall the meeting in my

own words from my research diary. This was an illuminating experience generating nine pages of text. What I found interesting was that as I recalled the conversation, new threads of thinking were entering my mind. These threads were connections that I had started to make with my own experiences, comparisons with the talk of others and with what I had read in the literature. Rather than negate these ideas, part way through I decided to change the orientation to landscape, divide the page in half and start a commentary (Appendix 10). Subsequently, this was forwarded to the participant for her amendments, comments and approval. She was interested in this representation of the conversation and also added some further valuable views of her own. This approach seemed to move nearer towards a co-creation of the conversation. However, I was concerned about accuracy. Yet, this issue did lead me to research the use of more creative means of analysis, which allowed me to get closer to a shared holistic analysis with participants. I follow-up how I developed this idea later in this section.

Member checking, co-construction and 'reading between the lines'

Due to the relational, shared approach proposed for gathering data, I decided not to rely on one meeting. The second meeting, I hoped, would involve the conjoint recounting of the earlier narrative. Additionally, participants had the right to control amendments to the transcript as well as whether, and how, they perceived to be identified. Prior to organising the second meeting, I forwarded the first conversation transcripts to each participant.

In hindsight, I questioned the practice of member checking, as advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to support trustworthiness in a narrative case inquiry. I wondered if I was naive to ask participants whether the transcript was what they recollected as sharing. It was also initially difficult for me to deal with the tension between seeking to give 'voice' to participant experiences and be able to put some narrative authority on the thesis. Furthermore, I did not disguise to potential participants during initial consent that, inevitably, the final story would be my own. I made a point during the consent process of emphasising that the presentation of my thesis

could not be in any sense a literal representation of the truth about them. Initially, I had taken this action because as Josselson (2007) advised, this provides one approach to avoid the dilemma of participants becoming upset when they cannot find *their* story in the text. I had assumed that all the participants would wish to view their transcripts. However, Sylvia had told me that she did not wish to see her transcript and would rather I present what I felt was important the next time we met. Despite a gentle suggestion to do otherwise, it was evident that Sylvia wanted me to do this. In my diary, I noted the event:

> Issue about member checking and what feels like a 'power' dynamic between Sylvia and me in our meeting today. Sylvia did not wish to 'check' her transcript. The reasons she gave were connected to the different translations of what was heard and written. She asked me to pick out what I felt was important and bring it to her next time.
>
> (Khanna, Personal diary, September 2008)

As I began to analyse the field texts from the initial meeting in preparation for the next (and following the second meeting) another assumption, which I had made struck me. I had not bargained for my capacity to 'read between the lines', to pick up the sub-text of what was said, or in some cases what I believed was deliberately avoided by participants. From a critical theory perspective, I was aware that illuminating the intentions and meanings (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000) behind participant appearances, contributed in part to the purpose of this inquiry but it felt uncomfortable. This dilemma was reconciled through a discussion with each of the participants regarding their initial conversation with me, and the subsequent narrative portraits written of them. I was also mindful that the research had moved to becoming a study not 'about' participant experiences, but offered my understanding and interpretation of what was shared by them. I believed I could do this because of how I had positioned myself as a researcher in this study since whatever I did, or thought, would be partially dependent on where others, and I, stood.

Overall, participants used the second meeting as an opportunity to reflect and elaborate further on their stories. In most cases, I followed the lead of the person I was talking with, into the second conversation. Most of them brought an object or something that they had drawn or written about course approval. In addition, I focussed on discerning what participants believed were the most important aspects of the first discussion. Participants seemed to prefer to follow the sequence of their talk and tended to identify what were critical moments for them discussing these in more detail. It felt as though the possible ambiguities and dilemmas that many of them had faced in sharing their narratives through conversation, provided a means to offer some sense of coherence, or order to their experiences (Sarbin, 1986). As a result, the second meetings were as long as the first. I became mindful of how, perhaps, forms of narrative that participants chose to share had originated from influences elsewhere. For instance, aspects of Sue's second conversation echoed talk from the first in the repeated use of similar words and phrases. It felt as though these thoughts had somehow become part of Sue's conversational repertoire regarding AHP approval events. I was also starting to pick up examples of identical talk across participants (Sylvia, Janet and Paula) and subsequently realised that since they shared departmental responsibilities, these narratives may have been reconstituted from earlier conversations.

Yet, not all of the second meetings were straightforward. I felt at odds with myself in deciding what to do following my first conversation with Sylvia, in which she had requested that I identify the most important aspects of the initial meeting. In an attempt to encourage choice by Sylvia, I identified all the comments she made in conversation and cut and pasted these together, I then cut them up into individual quotes. When it came to the second meeting, I then asked Sylvia to choose from the quotes, what she felt were the most significant aspects of our first talk together and then encouraged her to talk through these. During the meeting, I asked Sylvia why she had asked me to identify for her parts of the conversation to discuss. She put it like this, that her actions were simply linked to being able to trust me and that she knew I would do the right thing. I still felt very uncomfortable and

wondered if this scenario would have occurred had I not already worked in the organisation.

Reflecting on organisational politics

I was naive to think that organisational politics would not play their part in this study. As Brannick and Coghlan (2007) commented, embarking on a research study is always political. In this case, I was raising questions concerning a process that worked efficiently yet, primarily, in the interests of those stakeholders' who had the power to uphold it the Regulator and University. Until now to question the implications of approval processes on professional curricula and AHP academics, had not been considered. Perhaps to ask academics and manager-academics about how they experienced course approval events, which otherwise was viewed as settled, might be understood by some as seditious. Barone (2007:457) highlighted a dilemma that, in seeking to reframe the imbalances in relationships within certain events, researchers' may discover that whilst these dynamics are obvious to themselves, these 'connections are not always immediately obvious to those whose stories are being told'.

Indeed, for two of the participants being open in their views did seem to cause them concern. For instance, Sue, at one point, shared how she hoped nobody would read her transcripts and see the 'rawness' of her feelings. Yet, ultimately, she was still content with her view although it had become moderated. In addition, Janet asked to amend some parts of the transcript within the first meeting, since she felt she sounded too harsh. However, the others did not seem to voice any concerns of disloyalty. As will become clear within the interpretation, these participants appeared to use other means to convey their experiences. Interestingly, following their comments, each of the participants led me to believe that the study had value. Several interview conversations closed with discussing changes that could operationally enhance course approval events; these will be identified in Chapter Ten, within a section identifying implications for practice.

Realising a perspective for analysis and moving towards interpretation

According to Elliot (2005), not only is there a variety of approaches to narrative analysis but narrative analysis is challenging because it requires that the researcher discerns not just what, but how participants understand events. Overall, the literature reveals two overarching approaches: narrative analysis and the analysis of narratives. These approaches are associated with the work of Bruner (1986) who delineated two modes of knowing: logico-scientific or paradigmatic mode and the narrative or storied-knowing mode. The paradigmatic way of thinking aims at a context free explanation of thinking about experience, whereas the narrative approach focuses on providing a storied understanding that is contextual and temporal. Bruner (1986:11) illustrated how the two approaches differ by commenting that one aims to demonstrate 'a well-formed argument', whilst the other provides a 'good story' that in essence weaves in with the life it aims to describe.

Bruner's perspectives on different modes of knowing reflected the initial troublesomeness I had in realising a coherent approach towards analysis of the data. Whilst I aimed to do justice to what participants had shared with me, I sought to be vigilant in ensuring transparent representation of procedures used in working with the data. These challenges reflected an ongoing conflict between my own positionality in this study, as a narrative researcher, with previous 'training' in research skills as a post-graduate student, healthcare professional and manager in the health service. The latter had socialised me into reductive, competence-based analyses of practice. In practical terms, this was demonstrated by my initial approaches to analysis in seeking to sequence and order the data. On reflection, this early response was likely to have been connected to the 'accepted' research methodology culture in which I had previously worked and studied, geared towards measurement and predication. To occupy this culture provided a temporary sense of certainty, in other words an environment in which my own 'ontological security' (Giddens, 1984:23) could be maintained. This structured mindset was demonstrated

in analysis of the pilot study data in which it had been my intention to examine the use of Labov and Waletsky's (1997) structural method of analysing narrative. Although this structured framework denoted a detailed method for presentation of the analysis, I realised it was quite constraining and became more aware of criticisms of this approach (Riessman, 1993; Mishler, 1995; Patterson, 2008). For example, Patterson (2008) identified whilst much can be gained in utilising structured approaches, through demonstrating rigour, if such structured approaches are applied too strictly then some types of data will be lost. Indeed Patterson (2008:32) argued, overly focussing on a chronological sequence of events and taking no account of context would only produce a reductionist approach to interpretation. I understood whatever approach was chosen, would be shaped by my own decisions as a researcher, however, I am seemed to be stuck between my espoused intentions and actions. As result, I returned to reflect again on my values as a narrative researcher and the nature of the research questions underpinning the study, as outlined in the previous section.

Due to the focus of the research questions, Mishler's (1995) framework distinguishing three different functions of language: meaning; structure; and interactional context informed my thinking. I was interested in using methods of analysis that would allow me to 'open up' an area not substantively researched in order to explore the meaning of AHP approval events for academic staff. Moreover, I was fascinated by the 'situatedness' of the event, and sought to discover the performance of narrative within an interactional context. I take analysis to involve active involvement in structuring data leading onto interpretation. Practically, however, I do not view analysis as entirely separate from interpretation. In essence, there appeared to be an ongoing cycle of working with the field texts that involved reflection whilst doing, before and after analysis leading to interpretation. This promoted a sense of reflexive vigilance, enabling ongoing review concerning the nature of connections between my decision making as the researcher, alongside the espoused values and intentions underpinning the inquiry.

False starts with further attempts at analysis

In practice realising the perspective I wanted to adopt for analysis in the study resembled a struggle, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996:6-7) termed, between ways of 'imaginative reconstruction' and 'procedures of organisation'. Whilst I understood the need to demonstrate a systematic approach and clarity concerning my own position and perspective, I was anxious not to do this in an overly objective way, yet I had difficulties, at first, in locating a suitable method.

During my conversation with each of the participants, I made cursory notes followed by extensive reflections after each meeting. These consisted of my reactions to the conversations and comments on the observations that I had recorded, as well as some preliminary analysis ideas. The interview conversations produced extensive, rich field texts (transcriptions). I listened to the recordings in parallel with each field text. Surprisingly, I found that each of the participants provided lengthy 'turns of talk' and, influenced by the work of Mishler (1991), I began to recognise stories that interspersed their talk.

I soon felt engulfed by the amount of field texts generated. The meetings with participants had taken place from September 2008 until March 2009 and amounted to over 30 hours of interview conversations. In an attempt to make the picture clearer, I decided to dissect each of the fieldtexts to form a framework for locating and retrieving the information across each of the interviews within the 'neatness' of an Excel spreadsheet. However, I realised that my ways of 'managing data' were disconnected from earlier aspirations of 'becoming' a narrative inquirer. Instead, it seemed I had begun a form of qualitative analysis by 'fracturing the texts in the service of interpretation and generalisation, by taking bits and pieces edited out of context' (Riessman, 1994:68) and the narrative nature of academic staffs' accounts was missing. Due to the enormity of the task, I felt I was getting nowhere in understanding what, now, appeared as the splintered experience of participants; neither was I doing justice to what they had shared with me. How I resolved my dilemma is discussed next.

An interpretative montage

As hard as I tried, seeking to comprehend the experience of the approval process as a neat, one-track narrative did not work. No matter how I sought to read and listen to participant's conversations there seemed always to be more than one story going on. The kinds of stories available were different and seemed to vary dependent upon the standpoint of the teller. This standpoint appeared to be influenced by how the teller interacted with others and also the occurrence of different events within the approval journey itself. As a consequence, I realised that an approach to analysis and interpretation needed to accommodate a series of snapshots, which together formed an interpretative montage of the study. Here, I understand an interpretative montage to be a research narrative constituted by the overlapping and overlaying of several stories and images from different individuals.

The approach to which I was drawn to was the Listening Strategy by Gilligan et al. (2003). This strategy is an example of what Maxwell and Miller (2008) refer to as an integrated approach to analysis and included using both 'categorizing and connecting strategies in qualitative data analysis' (Maxwell and Miller, 2008:461). I found, similar to participating in enthusiastic conversation with someone, this approach enabled intense focus and provided the scope to flit across stories and significant events. The experience of accessing the data in this way was not in a linear manner, it was active and messy. Through adapting the approach of Gilligan et al. (2003) four 'snapshots' of analysis were taken and formed an interpretative montage as presented in Table 3.3. Through working with the data as a series of listenings and reconstructions, this approach to analysis provided valuable opportunities to value the individual perspectives of each participant, whilst also gaining a collective perspective on the experience of course approval.

Table 3.3 Interpretative montage: Illustrating different stages of interpretative analysis

(adapted from Gilligan et al. 2003)

From these readings a sense of how participants were either able to manage, or were being managed by the process of approval emerged. There was a sense of consonance and dissonance amongst the narratives in how staff dealt with the situation(s). For example, several participants talked about the use of acceptable dialogue, and through its recognition applied it successfully themselves. Another example was how a number of individuals similarly shared stories about the value of external networks and how they used the knowledge from these, locally, to their advantage. In sum, I began, tentatively, to understand that those involved seemed to adopt a particular disposition in tackling the contradictory demands of the approval process. This line of thought led me to identify three overarching aspects of experience, which formed the basis of an interpretative framework outlined next in Chapter Four.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology and the journey taken towards achieving the aims of the study. Within the conduct of the research, I sought to work at the edges of personal and professional boundaries, and between public and private narratives. I learned that such spaces are rarely transparent, neither are they straightforward. Yet, through enacting the intentions set out in this chapter the potential for (re)conceptualising the practice of course approval events, invariably considered as inevitable and understood, is possible. The next chapter aims to provide a bridge between this chapter and presentation of the data in Chapters Five to Eight.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS OVERVIEW

(Kronenberg and Pollard, 2005:2

Introduction

The presentation of this chapter at this point in the thesis represented a border crossing space and serves two purposes. Firstly, it represents a bridge between the last chapter, which outlined the methodology and reflections on the conduct of the research; in addition, this section provides an overview of how the following four chapters presenting the findings of the study are organised. Secondly, this chapter marks the onset of a conceptual journey, the start of a shift in thinking about the approval process. This point in my journey as a researcher represented what Wisker et al. (2006:195)) identify as a 'learning leap', which was to transform my understanding about the approval process. Consequently, once over this thinking border, having taken in what was presented, signified that my outlook on the landscape of course approval had become altered.

From a broader perspective, it has become clear, from this research, that a reconsideration of the ways in which the course approval process may serve to create borders around thinking about developments of curriculum and courses is needed. Kronenberg and Pollard (2005) claim that people make borders; as a result the potential exists for these to be unmade or renegotiated. Analysis of the data from this research showed that in order to deal with demands of the approval process, staff appeared to adopt a certain 'position' based on different kinds of thinking, acting and relating to others. These three aspects or 'facets' comprised the initial organising principles which underpinned development of the interpretative frame identified, here, as 'Facets of Experience'. Whilst each participant shared their own experience of approval, there was a strong sense of convergence and divergence amongst these stories and performances, which highlighted four positional identities: the Boundary Broker; Enabling Strategist; Professional Guardian; and Governance Trustee. Though each of these positional identities held similarities in their understanding of the process, between them there were also substantive differences in ways each coped with preparations and events. As a result the position adopted seemed to influence not only the nature of the participants' journey towards course approval, but also that of others.

The initial part of this chapter will explain the notion of 'positional identity' as it is presented here. Then, finally, I present and explain the interpretative framework, Facets of Experience. This interpretative frame is composed of three 'Facets of Experience': the Frame Perspective, Patterns of Action; and Interactions. The three Facets are each accompanied by what is referred to here as 'Influencing Dynamics'. The interpretative frame informs the structure of Chapters Five to Eight in which each of the positional identities are presented and discussed.

The notion of positional identity connected to the course approval process

This part of the chapter presents an overview of the characteristics of each of the four positional identities. However, it begins by offering an explanation of how the notion of positional identity was understood in this study.

Positional identity

A positional identity, referred to also as a position, is a temporary way of being, adopted by an individual in response to a particular situation, or a series of connected events, enacted through ways of thinking about, acting within, and interacting with others. In this study, it seemed within course approval events the likelihood of those involved taking up similar or different ways of contributing is possible. Positional identities portrayed particular characteristics. These characteristics were informed by 'rules' or expectations which hold influence over a specific situation. Sometimes these 'rules' are explicitly given and publically known; at other times rules may be enacted tacitly in response to an unspoken challenge. For instance, linked to the approval of a pre-registration AHP course, a clear expectation is the required mapping of evidence as to how the proposed course aligns with the Standards of Proficiency and Standards of Education required by the HPC. An unspoken rule might be the preferred use of certain words and phrases in presenting courses at an event. Before presenting each of the positional identities, I would like to offer three caveats:

- Whilst I understand participants' knowingly, or not, adopt a position within a situation, this does not mean to say that individuals are solely influenced by their environment. The environment offers the demand, challenge or resources that may lead individuals to position themselves in certain ways. Though, individuals' prior experience and, therefore, assumptions also inform their positional identity.
- In addition, I do not seek to generalise from this framework since, initially, interpretation took place within the context of pre-registration AHP degree courses. However, considering ways participants in approval events presented them 'selves' and the consequences of this on the performance of external monitoring activities, it is anticipated that the study will have resonance for academics across the sector.
- Although in Chapters Five to Eight I have discussed the various outlooks, actions, and resources of each position this is not to suggest that these descriptions are exhaustive. Above all, I recognise that influences on positional identities may arise from a collection of different aspects, such as culture, gender and other constituents that, depending on the standpoint taken, could lead to different meanings.

Each participant consistently appeared to adopt one of the positional identities. However, in some instances individuals were understood to be on the border, or cusp with another position. In instances where participants demonstrated a sense of hybridity these are highlighted and explained in each chapter. Hybridity was often made clear by participants themselves through explaining their beliefs and contrasting these with how they actually believed they needed to deal with a situation. Occupying a border space seemed commonly linked to intermittent involvement within an unfamiliar environment. There was a sense that some positional identities portrayed differences in power and control. The notion of power was raised directly by individuals who commented on their own levels of influence, which they believed they had, alongside sharing observations of others' within the approval arena. In the process of moving towards interpretations of the data, the positional identities of the Governance Trustee and Professional Guardian

were located first. In the setting of higher education and particularly the course approval process both of these positions appeared to antagonise one another. Both held strong but differing interests, one based on professional values, the other focussed on maintaining corporate values through ensuring the requirements of external monitoring were maintained and adhered to. The other two positional identities of the Boundary Broker and Enabling Strategist emerged later. Their power base and interests were less obtrusive, but nonetheless strong. The issues of power and control linked to the affects that combinations of positional identities might have on approval events is discussed in Chapter Nine.

A brief narrative description of each positional identity is given next, these are developed in-depth in Chapters Five to Eight inclusively, and are referred to as 'aspects' of the position at the start of each chapter.

'Boundary Brokers' can commonly be recognised by the status of their academic work, or presence at national level, within a professional area. They possess a large network of contacts and easily navigate unfamiliar spaces. Boundary Brokers' have an optimistic outlook and alongside their abilities as 'reflexive translators', are pivotal in negotiating agreements to benefit their own area. Within organisations, they frequently hold intermediary roles, which allowed them to be transient, yet generally to escape the strong hold that organisational governance placed on others. A Boundary Broker might introduce themselves like this:

> I sit have sat on both sides of the organisations involved and can as a result understand course approval from different perspectives

'Enabling Strategists' are staff who held senior positions within a higher education institution, commonly academic leadership roles. These individuals have substantive experience of working and navigating around hierarchical organisations. Whilst Enabling Strategists can sometimes be intimidating, they are also open to harvesting and supporting innovative ideas from staff, in order to secure a beneficial outcome for their area. These participants are politically astute, efficient and adept in anticipating the likely moves of others. An Enabling Strategist might portray their perspective like this:

> I take a very strong authoritative direction that makes people feel comfortable. I make things as slick as possible, so you get the best outcome for the least input

'Professional Guardians' are known for their unwavering concern for upholding professional knowledge and standards of practice. In HE Professional Guardians largely reside at department level, where they demonstrate a commanding knowledge and experience of their subject area. They can often be found in discussions, defending subject interests against what they perceive as the encroaching business orientation of corporate life. Consequently, in situations where they sense a threat to the scope of their professional practice, Professional Guardians are inclined to subversive actions or may alienate themselves from challenging interactions. Their rather protective stance might be reflected within this comment:

> I believe we need to hold on to our core skills and professional values rather than allowing them to be eroded

'Governance Trustees' can be characterised within the university setting by their concern for assuring quality and maintaining governance systems. They are often the gatekeepers of technical or procedural information. Governance Trustees use this knowledge to shape the compliance of others to fulfil the organisation's agenda. Those adopting this position can be considered as quite inflexible characters. Such action results in Governance Trustees often becoming solitary people, and their individual actions are subsumed by the systems, in which they work. A Governance Trustee might explain their situation like this:

> I think there's a common perception that we are quite bureaucratic, we keep quoting the regulations and we keep quoting policies on this and procedures for that, which is true there are regulations, there are polices, there are procedures. But I do try to be as flexible as possible, and accommodating as possible. But within the boundaries within which we have to work.

Emerging from this research the suggested link between each participant (pseudonym applied) and their adopted positional identity in the course approval process is summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Suggested link between participants and adopted position in the approval process

Participant	Role	Adopted position	Cusp orientation towards:
Alex	Manager-Academic	Governance Trustee	Professional Guardian
Chris	Academic	Professional Guardian	None
Diane	Academic	Professional Guardian	Enabling Strategist
Jac	Academic	Boundary Broker	Professional Guardian
Janet	Manager-Academic	Enabling Strategist	None
Julia	HEI Quality Team	Governance Trustee	Enabling Strategist
May	Professional Body Representative	Professional Guardian	Enabling Strategist
Paula	Professional Body Representative	Boundary Broker	None
Sam	HEI Quality Team	Governance Trustee	None
Sandra	Professional Body Representative	Professional Guardian	Enabling Strategist
Sue	Academic	Professional Guardian	None
Sylvia	Manager Academic	Enabling Strategist	None

Each of the four positional identities were constructed and informed by the interpretative framework, Facets of Experience, which is presented next.

The interpretative framework: Facets of experience

Facets of Experience emerged in this study, initially, from three organising principles which underpinned the recognition and orientation of the four positional identities. These organising principles are termed, here, as 'Facets of Experience', namely, 'Frame Perspectives, 'Patterns of Action' and 'Interactions'.

'Facets' were understood as anchor points for experience of approval events. Using the metaphor of an anchor is useful here since it suggests that whilst participants' narratives cluster around similar threads there is also accommodation for individual differences amongst these.

- The Frame Perspectives Facet represented the worldview of how participants understood the course approval journey. In essence, a frame perspective was demonstrated by particular descriptions participants' shared of how they understood the approval process and significant events occurring in it.

- The Pattern of Action Facet was portrayed by the ways action(s) within the arena of approval were organised and perceived. Differences and similarities in action are linked to particular positions. This Facet or domain also indicated possible insights into the motivations of each position that underpinned their modus operandi.

- The Interactions Facet reflected the different inter-relationships between individuals and agencies in the approval arena.

When reviewing each of the positions emphasis on the impact of each Facet differed. These differences were due to the presence of 'Influencing Dynamics' which underpinned each Facet. The role of Influencing Dynamics was depicted as a kind of moderator or means of influence on each domain. Within the interpretative frame these are defined and linked to each Facet as illustrated in Table 4.2

Table 4.2. Interpretative Framework: Facets of Experience

Facet	*Definition*	Influencing Dynamic	*Definition*
Frame Perspectives	The **Frame Perspectives** constitutes the worldview of a position. It is demonstrated in particular ways the environment is described.	**Boundaries**	**Boundaries** are imposed limits on ways of knowing how the environment of approval is, or the worldview of a position. The domains of patterns of action and interactions may also be restrained by this influence. Each position portrayed and, therefore, handled boundaries in different ways. Boundaries are demonstrated in action by Routines.
		Temporality	**Temporality** is connected to ways individuals are influenced by time, how they lived within it, and how this was connected to various spaces in the approval journey.
Patterns of Action	**Patterns of action** are the ways action(s) within the arena of approval were organised and perceived. Differences and similarities in arrangements for actions are associated with a particular position.	**Routines**	**Routines** are the enactment of Boundaries. Routines are forms of action that are initiated externally to an individual, or outside of a group. Their effect is usually to solicit conformity amongst others. Due to the repetitive way in which routines are enforced this influence may become taken for granted and reproduced passively by those participating within the approval process.
		Navigation	**Navigation** represents the scope and means used by different positions to move around the approval space(s). This influence on a position is demonstrated by the capacity to move across different levels of approval formation i.e. at policy level or in different arena, such as that of higher education, different areas of practice.
		Adaptation	**Adaptation** is understood as the means to adjust or transform current ways of doing things. The capacity for adaptation reflects the ability to cope with demands of approval, particularly connected to situations in which uncertainty arises.
Interactions	**Interactions** represent the potential for each position to demonstrate different forms of relating to others.	**Networks**	**Networks** are public or privately known links participants may have with others that they may use as a resource within the approval process. Networks may be local or national, complex or sparse.
		Translation	**Translation** is demonstrated by the capabilities to interact with others and reach an understanding with those of different positions and unfamiliar spaces. It may involve decoding circumstances, as well as unfamiliar terms.

Across all four positional identities, each Influencing Dynamic was portrayed to different degrees. These differences were illustrated in their 'Signature'. Typically each position, therefore, had a unique Signature, which was composed of similarities and differences in how prominent, or not, each Influencing Dynamic was. These are displayed in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. An Illustration of the typical Signature of each positional identity

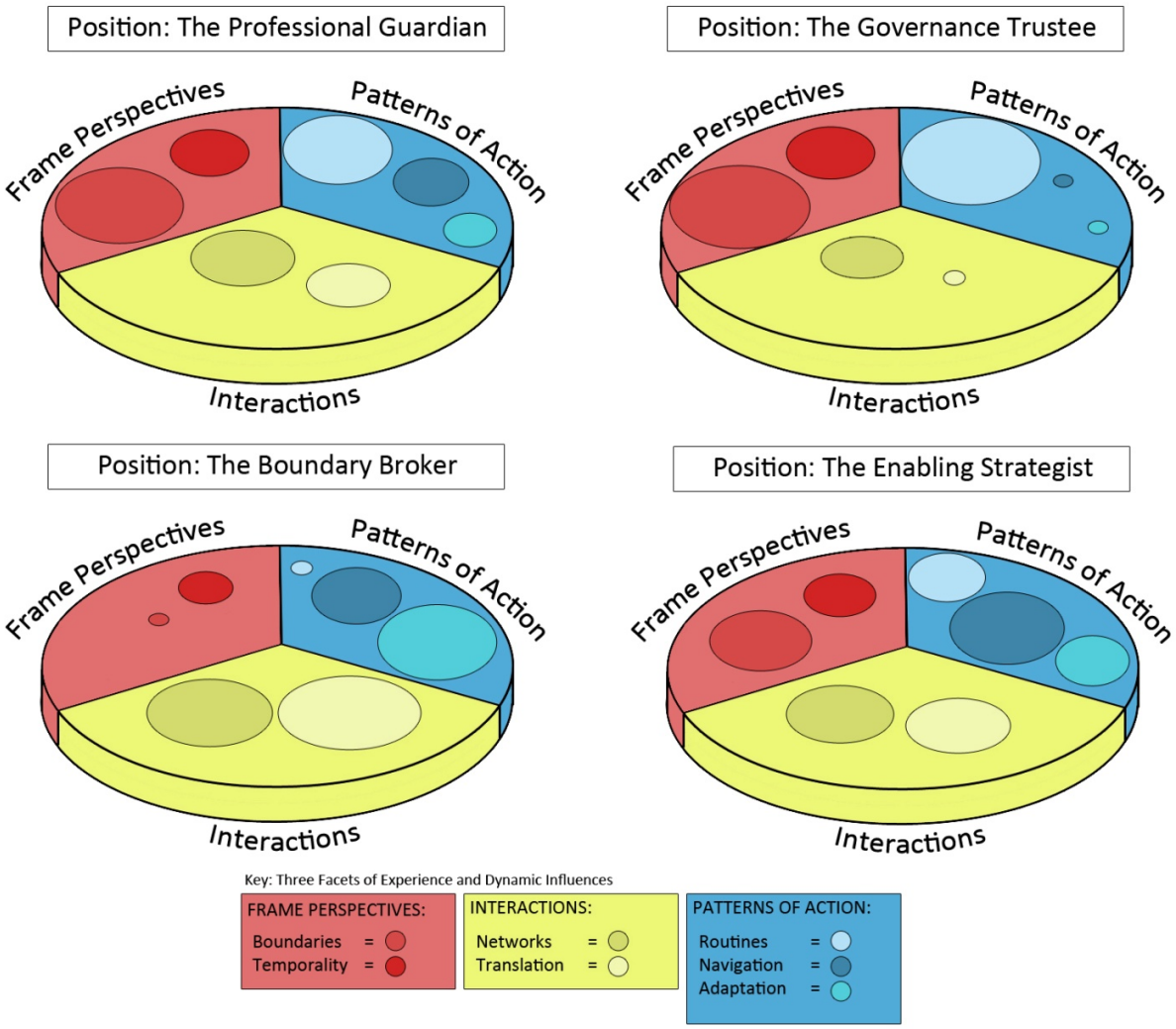


Figure 4.1. illustrates the typical balance of each Influencing Dynamic linked to positional identities in the study. Each of these are presented and discussed in detail across each of the four subsequent chapters. The overall consequence of positional identities and the impact of their presence on the course approval process is deliberated upon in Chapter Nine.

Summary

This chapter has presented the basis of an interpretative framework, which was initially used to develop the notion of positional identity presented in this research. positional identity is referred to, here, as the taking up of a certain approach or modus operandi, which reflected ways staff dealt with the demands of external monitoring and particularly of the course approval process. Four positional identities within course approval events emerged from this research, namely, Boundary Brokers, Professional Guardians, Enabling Strategists and Governance Trustees. The development and subsequent illustration of these was supported through the use of an interpretative framework, which was based initially on the identification of three facets of experience: Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action and Interactions. Each of these Facets was linked to several Influencing Dynamics: Boundaries, Temporality, Routines, Navigation, Adaptation, Networks and Translation. Based on participants' narratives, the degree of impact from each of the Influencing Dynamics reflected patterns of convergence and divergence in stories amongst staff. Within Chapters Five to Eight each of the four positional identities are individually presented and analysed in detail, supported by quotes from staff that appeared to adopt such positions. The structure for each chapter follows the organisation of the interpretative framework and shows the different ways in which the course approval process was negotiated.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS (I)

THE POSITIONAL IDENTITY OF THE GOVERNANCE TRUSTEE

Introduction

Emerging from this study, within course approval events, the likelihood of those involved taking up similar or different ways of contributing is possible. Positional identities represent participants who have portrayed particular characteristics. This chapter delineates the 'positional identity' of Governance Trustee within the journey of course approval, which includes both preparations for and the event itself. A 'positional identity', also referred to, here, as a position, is a temporary way of being, adopted by an individual in response to a particular situation, or a series of connected events, enacted through ways of thinking about, acting within, and interacting with others.

Supported by narratives from the research, the practices of the Governance Trustee during the approval process are presented. As with the three chapters, which follow, this chapter is organised into four sections. The first portrays the Signature of the Governance Trustee Position, which includes both a narrative image of the position and an illustration. The subsequent three sections of this chapter, follow the structure of the interpretative framework, explained in Chapter Four, each discusses the typical position of Governance Trustee from the standpoint of the three Facets of Experience: Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action and Interactions.

The Signature of the Governance Trustee

The Signature of a position distinguishes the unique way it can be identified from others. This section presents the Signature of Governance Trustee. It is constituted by, firstly, a 'narrative image' through which the unique Aspects of the Governance Trustee are depicted by participants' involved in the study. Secondly, drawing on the concepts identified within the Facets of Experience, presented in the last chapter, an illustration of the Governance Trustee Signature is also examined.

Aspects of the position: The Governance Trustee

The position of Governance trustee was identifiable early on in the process of interpretation and characterised by those whose primary concern was for maintaining and assuring systems of governance. Governance Trustees were frequently the gatekeepers of valuable procedural information, for instance, linked with regulations and policies and used this knowledge to shape compliance of others within the approval process. Aspects of this position were typically shown by staff that held responsibilities to review or co-ordinate systems for assuring quality enhancement within an organisation. Specifically within the approval process, the focus of a Governance Trustee was on upholding different stages of the process, ensuring that processes and events were co-ordinated, and that those involved did so in relation to published standards and benchmarks. As one Governance Trustee, explained, 'There's sort of the housekeeping level' and went on to add in relation to annual review '… to make sure everything is still doing what it said on the tin when it was first proposed' (Sam T1:3). It would seem from the example that those adopting this position held a perspective that was relatively fixed. The nature of truth was seen by them as a singular, objective matter associated with maintaining certainty.

From the 12 participants in the study two, Sam and Julia, adopted this position consistently. Sam was a senior, highly experienced staff member based in a central service function of the institution. Her general dress and demeanour gave the impression that anyone who came into contact with Sam would receive a calm, uncomplicated, yet suitably empathic response to their enquiry. Over the years, Sam had become established by working through the ranks, starting as administrative support to holding senior clerical roles in different schools of the university. In comparison, Julia was similar in her outlook to Sam though worked at national level. She was an officer in a large organisation, which was involved in monitoring the quality mechanisms within universities. Despite her status, like Sam, Julia was not in any way austere and instead had a relaxed, casual approach. Nevertheless, in my conversations with her it became apparent that she was an

experienced, politically astute individual who was familiar with ‘going back full circle’ (Julia T1:5), brought about by changing trends within HE over the last two decades. Julia, particularly, possessed a range of experiences in overseeing and contributing to the design of methodology used to monitor institutions and their courses.

Between the levels of regulatory policy initiation and implementation affecting the approval process, the networks of Governance Trustees extended from the micro locality at department level, through to the meso locality of organisational governance within a university, to include also providing a receptive interface for government policy cascaded from national level. Put simply, staff adopting this position acted as conduits. Governance Trustees, such as Sam, could be found liaising between course teams at department level, about the implementation of procedures, and the meso locality of governance in the organisation where she worked. Whilst Julia, represented the position of a Governance Trustee who worked between national and institutional level, she was no different to Sam in the values she held. From this viewpoint, Governance Trustees still presented an equal commitment to fulfilling institutional rules within course proposals; however, the approach was more “at arms length” and reflected the espoused decentralised approach to regulation by government at the time. Indeed, from Julia’s perspective, the process of external monitoring was not seen as a mechanism that was achieved wholly through adherence to what she termed ‘a prescriptional rule book’. Instead Julia preferred to describe the input of her organisation as ‘what we call best practice guidance’. Within this approach, there was a sense of delegated responsibility to those at local level within the aegis of universities, to evidence quality mechanisms and produce auditable information. For instance, Julia gave her standpoint on the use of subject benchmarks for each professional group:

> I think they're absolutely essential. Erm, they didn't exist before 2000 and one of the reasons that they were designed, may be it was ’99, but one of the reasons that they were designed was because there was no real consistency across the sector for what might be in a given programme. I guess health again was the exception because the regulator laid down what

> they wanted to see in a given programme or though I understand they're moving away from that now, so I understand, so there needed to be a way of saying well this is what a programme in say music looks like, this is what a student of music will actually undertake and these are the sort of expectations that we would expect them to come out with in terms of their skills, ability and knowledge (T1:9).

The use of 'essential' in Julia's narrative was interesting, since this view implied there may be some form of separation, between those who do the assessing of evidence regarding compliance with subject benchmarks in the approval process, from those involved with enacting it. In addition, whilst consistency of information is important, in order to demonstrate progress it suggests that from the Governance Trustees' stance that a curriculum can be summarised and measured in a definitive way. In this case, the adoption of such a position in approval could influence the practice of 'what can be counted gets done'. Subsequently, the focus of a course team may become detracted from reviewing curriculum, by conformance with a number of limited standards or benchmark standards. However, from the data Sam appeared not too perturbed by how other staff might see her bounded action, she put it like this:

> I think there's a common perception that, that we are quite bureaucratic, we keep quoting the regulations and we keep quoting policies on this and procedures for that, which is true there are regulations, there are polices, there are procedures. But we do try and be as flexible as possible and as accommodating as possible. But within the boundaries in which we have to work (T1: 4/5).

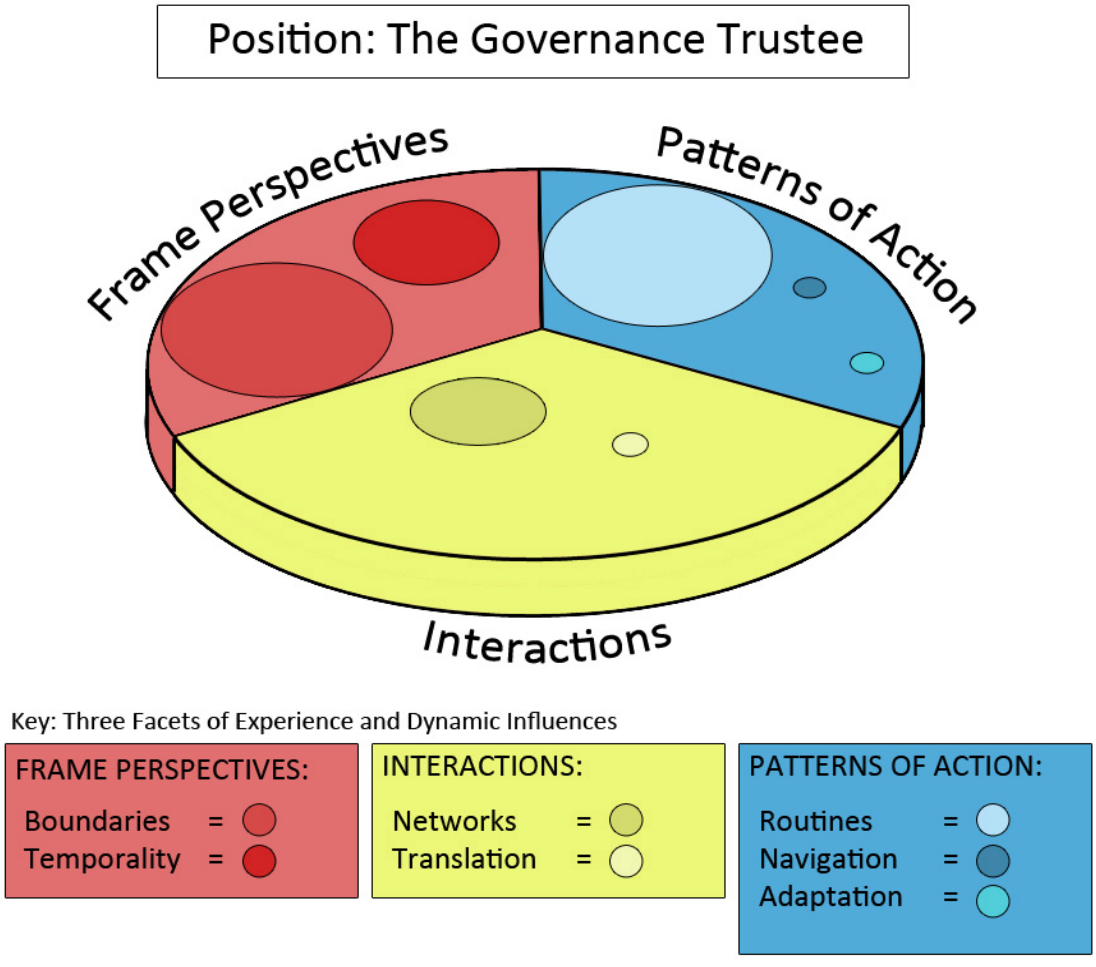
Sam's narrative illuminated a further aspect associated with this position. Although Governance Trustees lacked scope for negotiation and navigation outside of institutional boundaries, their focus was not just on transmission of rules since, within the approval space, it was not uncommon to find empathy from Governance Trustees whose role it was to guide enactment of the system, for those impacted by it. Perhaps such an understanding was reached due to the realisation that in order for the approval of courses to be a successful project, this might best be achieved through understanding the positions of others. Yet, in the Governance Trustee's position, I sensed a form of "barren mutualism" where, similar to the observations

made by Morley (2003) connected to problematic collegiality in her study, mutualism between those involved within approval was false and only nurtured to herd staff into compliance.

Signature of the Governance Trustee position

The Signature of the Governance Trustee is illustrated in Figure 5.1. This diagram identifies each of the three Facets of Experience.

Figure 5.1. The Signature of the Governance Trustee



The Signature of a Position comprising of three Facets is each, in turn, constituted by two or three Influencing Dynamics. The latter are depicted by textured circles of different sizes. Differences in size denoted the degree of impact each Influencing

Dynamic had on a positional identity. The ways each Signature, and therefore characteristics of each position were realised, was through appraising the differences and similarities in how participants' narratives represented ways they understood, acted and interacted. Each Facet is outlined, as follows:

- The Frame Perspective facet portrayed the worldview of how participants understood the course approval journey. From the data, Frame Perspectives were connected with two Influencing Dynamics, Boundaries and Temporality.
- Patterns of Action represented the ways action within the arena was perceived and organised. This Facet was connected to three Influencing Dynamics, Routines, Navigation and Adaptation.
- Interactions reflected the different inter-relationships between actors and agencies within the approval journey and had two Influencing Dynamics, Networks and Translation.

The Signature of the Governance Trustee suggested a substantive preoccupation with Boundaries, Temporality and Routines. As such, this Signature particularly emphasised the Frame Perspectives (the worldview) and Patterns of Action (how action is understood). This illustration of a typical Governance Trustee Signature, could suggest that these participants placed a greater value on capacities to control what was to be included and done within the approval process, than on needing to maintain relations in order to fulfil their objectives. Each of these three facets and their connected Influencing Dynamics are examined within the next three sections of this chapter.

The Frame Perspectives of the Governance Trustee

The Frame Perspectives facet representing the worldview of a position is constituted by Influencing Dynamics: Boundaries and Temporality. Each of these Influencing Dynamics regulated the overall impact of this facet.

- Boundaries were identified as the ways participants' understood limits. These emerged either from others or were self imposed. This dynamic subsequently challenges the scope for thinking and action associated with a position.

- Temporality was connected to ways participants were influenced by time, how they lived within it, and how this was connected to various spaces in the approval journey. The link that each position made between time and space influenced their conduct within the spaces of approval.

Boundaries: Order! Order! ORDER!

Reflecting on the four positions identified in this study and the nature of Governance Trustees, of those in the study their understanding or worldview on the landscape of external monitoring processes was the most bounded. As such, "order" needed to be maintained at all times. Not dissimilar to the Speaker of the House of Commons, the identity of the Governance Trustee is one of presiding over the organisation of external monitoring activities, such as the approval of a course. It was their role to ensure that the documentation presented complies with the university and respective professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements. Governance Trustees also organised the milestones within the approval process, for example, when meetings between the course team and approval panel will occur. In sum, their view of the world was bound entirely by the component parts, for instance, key participants and documentation, which they believed or were, rather, told existed in the approval process. Whilst there might be some understanding of the benefits of working with others, Governance Trustees were commonly preoccupied by an environment, which reflected efficiency. This was supported by the mechanistic processes, commonly by e-mail, used for disseminating the way things would be done and the co-ordination of all stakeholders in the correct places.

Despite Julia and Sam having substantive experience, their Frame Perspective was limited to what Giddens (1984) refers to as, their 'presence-availability'. In other words, their understanding of the approval process and proximity to others in it was only for the purpose of executing their function. They, themselves, took on clear, ordered roles that were part of a larger hierarchy of which they constituted only a small part. Consequently, the thinking of the Governance Trustee was restricted by

the requirement of institutions, such as the many evaluative agencies surrounding pre-registration health profession courses, alongside other positions within the arena(s) that had more power. Julia put it like this:

> So our role is to support institutions to manage their own affairs effectively. So we check that they have the processes and procedures in place in order to monitor and assure the standards that they set and then we check that they're carrying out those processes and that they are being effective. But we don't actually check or assure the standards of the award themselves because that's not our role (T1:6).

Here, Julia provided a clear description of the context and orientation of this position. Whilst the ways of the Governance Trustee's world was already prescribed from them, this was not as straightforward as it seemed. Julia went on to subsequently explain how, due to the increased number of evaluative agencies, the ability to have a clear understanding of the role of each one, and relationships between each, had become disconnected. As a result the "correct" view of the approval world perpetuated by those who adopted the identity of Governance Trustee, appeared to be threatened by potential for disarray in co-ordination amongst those agencies involved within the process of approval, the antithesis of this position. Indeed the perceived, procedurally bounded frame of the Governance Trustee, could lead to a perspective of powerlessness within an event that they had actually orchestrated. So, whilst Governance Trustees were drawn to the perspective of being at the hub of 'co-ordinating' or 'overseeing' events, their way of understanding the approval process was as "trustees" only, rather than as active players. A further dynamic in how the perspective of Governance Trustees seemed to be framed, was linked to time.

Temporality: Time guards

One of the particular constraints of the Governance Trustee position, due to its particular frame perspective, was associated with the Dynamic Influence of time and space. Because of the need to observe these Influencing Dynamics, Governance Trustee were 'Time Guards'. In particular, the perspective of Governance trustees was framed by their reference points to statute, institutional policy and standards,

alongside the involvement of stakeholders that originated historically. This orientation provided a sense of certainty and control that approval could be captured through the providing evidence of compliance within certain parameters. Limits not only included benchmark statements and standards, but also involved fulfilling the process in a sequential order connected with specific time intervals. Due to the need to observe these factors Governance Trustee were 'Time Guards'.

For those adopting the position of Governance Trustee, the methodology applied to the course process itself had altered over time and this had led to different methods being used. For pre-registration courses, as a result of several catalysts in the policy stream, different amendments had been mandated. Julia shared with me, from her frame perspective, how she understood these alterations:

> So it started out with a concern about standards requiring more activity and more consistent activity. And then as we sort of progressed through this decade the policy change was one of less intensive, less bureaucratic, more light touch, more risk based. So at the point where the approval and ongoing monitoring processes were sort of reviewed and evaluated, and that was about 2005, it was decided the they were far too intensive, far too burdensome and they were almost thrown out of the window because it was too much and it was decided that a light touch was needed. However we're going back round the circle now and light touch is deemed to be, becoming inadequate with all of the problems in health and social care, particularly in the social care aspect and it's impacting on higher education as well. The [government] departments and the funding council again are rather concerned that there isn't enough assurance of standards in universities and are wanting now to go away from the light touch and back to more intensive, more in depth scrutiny. So we are, we're going back full circle (T1:5).

From Julia's story the passing of time connected to spaces in which course approval takes place is a reactive one. Julia talks about methods used to monitor courses like being a fad, which seemed to appear and disappear. Despite the repetition of activity, a sense of learning from these successive implementation cycles was absent.

Whilst Julia's retrospective view might inform trends in assuring the quality of courses, the perspectives of other positions presented and discussed in subsequent

chapters, contends that this retrospective view, projected on to the educational futures of pre-registration students, may lead to tighter controls on professional narratives. Where a prospective view is revealed by those adopting the identity of Governance Trustee, their perspective appeared to be characterised by the presence of metrics. These measures were linked to maintaining efficiency and to using up as little time as possible, as illustrated, here, by Sam:

> It's also very difficult to give up on something that you know worked well and people had confidence in. But I recognise it was perhaps an old fashioned way of doing it. It was very labour intensive and there are other ways of doing it. And I think it's having the confidence to say okay, well that was then, this is now, how can we best achieve it with the resources that we've got and the time that we've got. Because people's time is so precious (T1:14).

Change in practices, then, was driven by approaches that would realise economies in the use of resources. In essence, the Governance Trustees' worldview was limited by their need to control and order activities within the resources available to them. As such, their perspective was towards maintaining and ensuring the process needs of approval were met, irrespective of the quality of what was being offered. This restricted thinking also limited the action of the Governance Trustee, as illuminated by examination of the second facet of experience linked to this position, Patterns of Action.

Patterns of Action of the Governance Trustee

This section explores the second facet of experience identified within the interpretative framework. Patterns of Action represent arrangements in how a positional identity portrayed the ways action is understood and organised within the approval space. The characteristics of this facet are demonstrated through talk about participants' own patterns of action, alongside that of others within the approval journey. Within the transcripts of the interview conversations, patterns of action were revealed by references participants' made either to themselves, or others, for instance, in the use of 'I', 'We' and 'Them'.

In relation to understanding the patterns of action of the Governance Trustee, this position was predominantly systems orientated. In other words, their action was focussed towards maintaining the systems that governed and assured the approval of pre-registration AHP courses. As such, this position provided a focal point in which the process used to deliver an approval event emanated and was co-ordinated at local level. However, even though Governance Trustees occupied what may be considered as a pivotal role in the approval journey, those in this position saw themselves as part of larger system, in which patterns of action were actually prescribed for them. For example, under such circumstances, when sharing their commentaries on events surrounding the validation of courses, these participants' commentaries belied a mission of conformity, which overtook any notion of being conciliatory towards academics. The remainder of this section focuses specifically on exploring how the position of Governance Trustees and Patterns of Action are enacted through the three Influencing Dynamics connected with this domain. These are discussed in turn here as Routines, Navigation and Adaptation.

Routines: Custodians of the system(s)

In this study, each Position appeared in various ways to utilise, or act, in response to 'routines' influencing their actions. Routines are linked, here to kinds of action that occur within the approval process, which create a demand on those impacted by the outcome of them. As an Influencing Dynamic, Routines are the enactment of how Boundaries are understood. In other words, the "acting out" of Routines provided the example of how Boundaries were understood by a Position. The Frame Perspective or worldview of a Governance Trustee linked to Boundaries was characterised by a bounded perspective, which was limited by orderliness. From the position of a Governance Trustee, the action of Routines was to require those involved within course approval to reciprocate in ways that were counted as acceptable. Linked to Routines within the approval process, the responsibility of the position of Governance Trustee was to be the custodian of the system(s). One of the ways, Routines was demonstrated by Governance Trustees was their

preference towards the production of course documents, such as Programme Specifications, which followed, prescribed templates. This action had the affect of incurring uniformity within the patterns of action of other positions in the approval process. At a local level, each AHP subject area enacted Routines through compliance with 'rules' prescribed by the University and also the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies they were linked with, which granted approval and accreditation of pre-registration AHP courses. For example, a university will normally specify course structures and module credits that are associated with all the named awards to be granted by it. The maintenance of rules ensured the conformity of course structures to institutional frameworks. Routines linked to Patterns of Action of the Governance Trustee, therefore, acted as moderators, which solicit conformity. Perhaps at their most successful, fulfilling Routines in the approval process fosters a sense of unity. This form of "unity" might be demonstrated by other positions in their talk about their sense of accountability, which they believed they held to individuals or organisations within the approval process.

It seemed as far as those connected to the position of Governance Trustee understood it, their role was to support the process of approval by ensuring that all those at local level, in other words course teams, followed the rules that had been set and duly produced the evidence requested. Sam's description of her task in approval preparations exemplifies the focus of a Governance Trustee, as explained here:

> We should be involved in the course development team, right from the very beginning to make sure that they [academic staff] are on track and not doing anything completely out with the university regulations (T1:9)

Likewise Julia, a Governance Trustee, used words such as, 'oversee' and 'to deliver', describing her role as follows:

> So I'm involved in the design of the method, the implementation of the method, the monitoring of the method and supporting the review co-ordinators that co-ordinate the reviews, so mainly process based (T1:1)

Julia and Sam both showed how their orientation towards fulfilling the Routines of "the system" or compliance with a particular "method", for example, of describing modules was central to the position of Governance Trustee. In contrast participants in other positions, such as Professional Guardians, scorned what they felt had been allowed to become the automated rubber-stamping of courses.

However, for the Governance Trustee success could only be achieved through adhering to preferred patterns of action, by following the rules alongside providing the required evidence to the various evaluative agencies and their approval panels. Sam demonstrated what appeared to be the nature of ordering activities, she believed this was characterised by 'making sure that things happen in the correct sequence' (T1:16). Sequencing also involved everyone involved knowing their place in the hierarchy. Indeed, for Governance Trustees' the consequences of gaining approval were associated with course teams and the staff around them, acquiescing to the power of approval bodies, as if nothing else mattered. As Sam explained:

> HPC [the regulator approving AHP courses] has obviously got a checklist, these are, these are questions that "we must ask regardless". And they're looking at the sorts of SETs [standards of education and training], or whatever it is. And they have just got a checklist. And if they [the visitors] can't go back to the HPC with every little box ticked, then there's, you know, the course doesn't get approved (T1:13)

Her stance reflected what conformity to Routines involved for those on the inside working in the micro locality level of a university. Though, for staff in other positions, it might have been more inviting not to think too much about the performative approval process in which they were engaged in, and agree passively through doing what was asked. Unexpectedly, this underlying feeling was also reflected in an observation, from a Governance Trustee, which was linked to what they saw in the Patterns of Action in others. As Sam put it, 'As far as course

approval is concerned some folk like being told what to do. And when to do it. And how to do it' (Sam T1:12). In order to ensure that different stages of the approval process were completed successfully, from the above remark, at first I assumed that Governance agents would prefer the passivity and apathy of staff. Yet in contrast, it seemed as if passivity actually worked against them, since in practice, here, this amounted to forms of rigidity in other positions that affected the work of Governance Trustees. In other words, the very Routines that the position of Governance Trustees' were influenced to enact were also disempowering to the fulfilment of their own patterns of action. Sam portrayed this point in an expression of anxiety about her responsibilities in the process of approval:

> I don't mind the servicing of meetings like that, it's the setting them that really, really is very frustrating, you know, making sure you've got all the right people, in the right place, at the right time (T1:4)

As I had not previously considered, before, the possibility that the positional identity of Governance Trustees could accommodate feelings of anxiety, this insight raised questions about the adaptive capabilities of this position.

Adaptation: Supporters at arms length

Adaptation refers to the capacity of a person within approval events to change their patterns in action, so that they are more able to cope with the demands of the process. In relation to Governance Trustees, their responsiveness to adapt seemed compromised by the distance between the locality in which they were situated and those they chose to influence. As a consequence of this distance, they were never seen as belonging to a wider course team in an approval event, they were set apart as 'supporters at arms' length.

The incapacity for adaptation by Governance Trustees was reflected in previous comments that Julia had made about the varying external methods of review that had been used in the past. Her narrative reflected frustration in observing the senseless effects of short-termism that these strategies were having on course teams at a local level. Yet, those who adopted the position of Governance Trustee

were powerless to make adaptive changes when new approaches to monitoring did not accrue the benefits it was assumed they would deliver. At the local level, too, participants who adopted the position of Governance Trustee also sought to be adaptive, to enable others to cope better with the demands being placed on academic staff. For example, through understanding the time constraints on course teams, who were asked to submit documentation to support the approval process. Sam put it like this:

> You've got to get papers to them at least a week before the meeting but recognising that course teams are under pressure and working to their deadlines as well. Erm, I think there's a common perception that, that we are quite bureaucratic, we keep quoting the regulations and we keep quoting policies on this and procedures for that., which is true. There are regulations, there are polices, there are procedures but we do try and be as flexible as possible and as accommodating as possible. But within the boundaries within which we have to work (T1:4/5).

Sam's stance seemed to infer that Governance Trustee's were misunderstood by others and that beneath their performative, distant exterior, there was an adaptive sensing evident in and through a mutual concern for others. Such mutuality supports the idea that, perhaps, for some Governance Trustees their previous or current capacities for navigating through the spaces, which make up the local arena of approval, is pivotal in order for approval events to become satisfactory for all involved. In other words, connectivity between the process and purpose of approval is no longer disconnected and the arena of approval becomes a space of, and for, mutual understanding by all involved.

Navigation: Every which way but loose

Navigation is the final Influencing Dynamic within the Facet of Patterns in Action. Navigation portrayed the capacities and resources each of the positions had for movement around, and within, each of the localities in the practice of course approval. For example, whether or not the movement of a Position was typically fixed inside only one locality at department level.

The influence of Navigation on a Governance Trustee was limited and if scope for movement did exist, this was not straightforward and often thwarted by the organisation's agenda in which they worked. As a consequence, they were caught between different demands presented by various stakeholders in the process. For the Governance Trustee course approval was a navigational situation that represented an 'every which way but loose' scenario. In sum, Navigation for those who adopted the Governance Trustee position had a Janus-like effect. This was for two reasons. Firstly, the orientation of a Governance Trustee was considered to be entirely bound by its service orientation. So, capacity for movement in the space of approval was generally fixed within the specified organisation(s) in which they worked. Secondly, the capacities of the Governance Trustee for Navigation within the approval space were also influenced by their exposure of working within unfamiliar areas of the organisational hierarchy. If those who adopted the position of Governance Trustee had worked in various areas of the organisation, the knowledge they gained from this seemed to enable them to see course approval from more than their own perspective; though, this capacity to see matters from both sides was unusual. Sam shared her experience:

> I think my, my time working in different Schools obviously is sort of pertinent to, to this discussion today. As is my time spent in, in [department name removed] but it's seeing it from two different perspectives, as sort of the stuff that has to be done at School level in preparation for approval and the university level stuff (T1:2).

Sam's capacity to see different perspectives seem to suggest that this allowed her to gain an holistic picture about what made the pieces of the approval puzzle come together.

A further challenge presented by the dynamic influence of Navigation for Governance Trustees was when policy being implemented subsequently changed direction. In areas which are high on the political agenda, such as HE and the health service, the focus of Governance Trustees was liable to change depending on shifts in the policy stream. Julia explained that whilst in her role she might be

working in one direction with the dissemination of policy, the mandate could be suddenly changed. She expressed this sense of ongoing amendments in several instances during her conversation with me, referring to the phrase 'a change of wind'. As a result, for example, the very 'method' she was asked to transmit and embed in practice could be altered. Nevertheless, she seemed to be able to pace and reconcile herself within these circumstances, since there were several instances throughout her narrative in which Julia qualified her views with the proviso that 'things go round in circles' (Julia T1: 3,5,6,13,15).

Surprisingly, for all the assured action of the Governance Trustee it seemed that those linked to this position were vulnerable to change themselves. Despite people in this position seeming to have power, through embedding routines and boundaries in the practices of course approval, they were, in fact, largely powerless since Governance Trustees, therefore, appeared not to have the autonomy to move around the arena of approval, unless it was prescribed by others. In general, it seemed that Governance Trustees lacked the scope to navigate outside of the institutional rules that were set by others. Sam explained the situation:

> With the health courses we're very much told how to organise them [course approval panel members] and how to set them up by the faculty. And it's very much the faculty saying well you've got to treat HPC like this 'because'! And you don't want to upset them because of that and you know it's almost as though you take the back seat from the very beginning because these are very important people and without them our students aren't going to get registration. Erm, and then we're told how to interact with them. And who we may speak to and who we shouldn't speak to (T1:7).

The above scenario reflected the powerlessness of the Governance Trustee. Indeed, it seemed that Governance Trustees were not even trusted to have freedom of speech, outside of what was already specified by the Routines of the organisation in which they worked. This seemed to affect a sense of powerlessness and a kind of disbelief, as Sam reflected: 'it's…it's odd I think. Erm, I, I think I am worldly enough, wise enough and sensible enough to know who we should be speaking to about what' (T1:8). Overall, it seemed that one of the least desirable

characteristics of adopting the positional identity of Governance Trustee was, perhaps, that they were trusted by few people at all. Since through occupying this position, Governance Trustees were simply conduits for Patterns of Action decided elsewhere and this view is borne out, knowingly or not, in the choices those who adopted this position seemed to make connected to their ways of relating, or not, to others involved in the approval process. The Facet or Domain of Interactions is examined next.

Interactions of the Governance Trustee

The final section of this chapter illustrates the Facet connected to the Interactions of the Governance Trustee. Within this study, Interactions are understood as the capacities to inter-relate with other participants and organisations within the approval space. The Interactions facet was typically distinctive across each of the four positions. In particular, ways used to relate to others provided an insight into some of the distinctive characteristics that contributed to the narrative portrait of each position. The remainder of this section will focus on exploring the position of Governance Trustee and their relations with others as moderated through two Influencing Dynamics: Networks and Translation. Each are discussed in turn, here, and illuminated by how I understood what participants shared with me in their narratives.

Networks: A support function

A persistent narrative that emerged from participants' accounts involved within the approval process was the presence of, and capacity to, utilise Networks. I understood the presence and use of Networks in this study, as publically or privately known links participants, or positional identities, had in order to access others. These Networks operate amongst the different localities that constitute the approval process, for example, within the space of policy implementation or at a local level across different academic departments.

Overall, those who adopted the position of Governance Trustee did not typically demonstrate a proactive approach towards developing and maintaining Networks.

Instead, those linked with this positional identity seemed to prefer to employ links or pathways to connect and communicate with others, which were either already established, or had been previously initiated by others. Specifically, in the case of Governance Trustees the influence of Networks was interpreted as a means to support their function or was procured in order to assure the maintenance of systems. An important asset of the Governance Trustee was typically the length of service they had accrued. Thus, historical connections could be used without much effort to support the effective preparation of courses for approval. Sam comments about the value of her historical networks here:

> So, you know, I was central, I went out and I came back in. And other people have moved, have moved across central departments. But I think having worked in the faculty and having seen how things work, all the processes that have go through at faculty level before it gets to us, I think really does help (T1:11)

Similarly, Julia, who worked predominantly at a national level, explained how she established and maintained networks whilst working within a project associated with the development of external monitoring,

> …first of all sort of re-examining what audit is doing and why. How it does it, what it's trying to achieve and then working up a method that can achieve the desired outcomes. And in doing that we are talking to all of the stakeholders [laughs] so particularly we're working quite closely with the representative bodies. Then following and establishing a sort of baseline of what they want and what the sector wants then we'll sort of go to consultation with institutions and take it from there (T1:1).

The above narrative from the perspective of a typical Governance Trustee implied another way that the Dynamic Influence of Networks was interpreted by this position. In this instance, Networks were also understood as a mechanism to ascertain information from a particular group which might, subsequently, help to validate the directives that could be issued to staff; though, Julia's story also linked with the phrase, 'talking to all stakeholders', this activity involved a complicating action. In particular, Julia spoke of how the nature of stakeholders involved was becoming tenuous:

> I mean within institutions I know that there are always tensions between what's wanted in the practice area, or what the academic requirements are, and what the strategic health, or the commissioner might want as well. Erm there's inevitably going to be some play of between those three parties (T1:14).

In fact, both Sam and Julia spoke of how they found themselves at the centre of an uneasy alliance between stakeholders, all of whom had their own agendas, yet, were required to be brought together within external monitoring events to fulfil a common purpose. The capability of the Governance Trustee to empathise with other stakeholders and understand their view point was an important quality to ensure arrangements for the approval of courses went smoothly for all concerned. Across each of the positions I understood this empathic quality as the Dynamic Influence of Translation.

Translation: As a means to the end

Within the Facet of Relations, I understood the Dynamic Influence of Interactions was led by the capacities' of each positional identity to relate with others from unfamiliar spaces. The capacity to engage successfully with different kinds of interactions, particularly through dialogue, added an interesting dynamic to the process of approval and whether the event was viewed as satisfactory by those involved. For example, in those participants who adopted positional identities in which the influence for Translation was low this might affect interactions in the long term. Linked to the approval process, though, tasks might be completed efficiently, certain forms of Translation, if these were too strong, may lead others to believe their opinions were not heard or valued. Such a situation may not only dissuade participants from future involvement, but also encourage subversive behaviour by them choosing to hide issues for fear of the likely response. In contrast, those positional identities, which demonstrated advanced abilities to deal with the Influence of Translation, were able to gain knowledge through interactions within unfamiliar localities to their own. Such knowledge was then re-interpreted and translated for the benefit of others in their own locality.

Similar to this positional identities dealings with the other Influencing Dynamics, those who adopted the position of Governance Trustee linked their abilities to manage Translation with securing an effective outcome from the system of approval. To be more precise, Translation seemed to represent nothing more than a means to achieve the end of a course approved. Typically, for Governance Trustees, Translation was connected with the capacity to evaluate local issues through familiarity with work patterns and hiatus points of activity for course teams as they approached an approval event. Emerging from this study those who represented this position demonstrated Translation by their understanding of the need for some negotiation in deadlines due to the workload approval created. Sam referred to the 'volume of paperwork that people have to plough through' (Sam T1:4) which supported the process. Approval panel members, such as representatives who were present on behalf of professional bodies, were required to assimilate this information, which also needed time:

> 'You've got to get the papers to them [approval panel members] at least a week before the meeting, but recognising that course teams are under pressure and working to their deadlines as well' (T1:4)

Deadlines were troublesome. Yet, as Sam went onto explain in the above comment these only became so, if the demands deadlines placed on those involved were recognised. For Governance Trustees' understanding the situation of others was connected to maintenance of the system they were entrusted with safeguarding. Based on experience Sam demonstrated Translation like this:

> I've got a far more rounded understanding of where the course team are coming from, if they say, "oh, can't possibly meet that deadline because"…you know, it's not just excuses, I know why they can't (T1:11).

On a macro scale their knowledge about the multitude of external monitoring methods acting on course teams, since it was they who organised these events, also supported their capacity to Translate others' positions.

> So for the healthcare programmes they're caught between two, two sides aren't they? They're responsible for their own standards, but in order to have

> the programme approved by the regulator they've got to meet regulator's standards and there are two very different approaches that come into play. So our role is to support universities to manage their own affairs effectively (Julia T1:6).

Julia's comment reflects her Translation of the concurrent demands being placed on pre-registration AHP teams seeking approval and accreditation with several different agencies. Likewise, in the micro locality of a university, course approval as an event itself was understood as complex and demanding. From this perspective, Sam appeared to indicate that Translation between those involved was also an important factor in the success of an event, which could affect the experience and purpose for all, as this observation portrays:

> I think what really, what really makes an approval event go well is if people go in with the right attitude and that this is going to be a collegial discussion, rather than you know, 'we're going to find fault with what you've written', and start picking holes in it (T1:5).

This statement identified Sam's viewpoint on the value of Translation. Here, she suggested that overall interpreting the requirements of others, by everyone having 'the right attitude', within the process was invaluable to success. Her contrasting use of the phrase, 'we're going to find fault with what you've written' portrayed the potential style of an inspectorate style approach. Instead Sam suggested for the event to be satisfactory for all involved, it could only be supported by 'the right attitude' and through her term 'a collegial discussion'. Whilst the position of Governance Trustee showed concern for supportive translation of what course approval involved, this did not extend to circumstances in which the level of power sharing might compromise the robustness of systems supporting the process. Sam explained

> There's an awful lot of staff that expend a huge amount of effort trying to find ways around the academic Regs, "And it doesn't say you can't do it in the Regs" [laughs]. Erm, what was it someone came out with in the office the other day, I think it was referred to as "institutional disobedience". I think it's a wonderful term. I was trying to find the opportunity to work it into some official document somehow. But er, no I think I think... people take a great deal of delight in trying to find ways around the Regs. I know

> there's one or two people who will have conversations with twinkles in their eye, saying "Well it doesn't say you cant do it in the Regs". It doesn't say you can do it either! (T1:17).

Therefore, whilst Governance Trustees might be seen as effective in translating the needs of others in the approval process this narrative reflected that compromise was always on their terms.

Summary

From this study, the Position of Governance Trustee was the least adopted by those involved within course approval preparations and events. This position had few similarities with others. In fact the closest, was the use of Networks which all of the Positions engaged in, probably due to the relational practices that were a part of the approval process itself. The biggest difference in contrast with other positional identities was the concern for the Influence of Boundaries and Routines. The narratives of the Governance Trustee were consistently underpinned by "using" the Influence of Boundaries strongly in order to maximise a sense of control over the proceedings. Furthermore, the position of Governance Trustee was devoted to safeguarding Routines, practices that staff had to comply with in order to ensure consistency and standardisation of their approach.

This chapter has shown how the Position of the Governance Trustee was fixed on following the rubric of the process; pursuing this approach meant that course proposals were successfully approved and institutional credibility maintained. Yet those who adopted this position seemed unconcerned with what was happening inside courses, in other words how the quality of what was proposed had been developed. This stance seemed entirely in opposition to those involved within the process who were concerned with upholding and safeguarding professional knowledge, alongside demonstrating integrity of the curriculum. An example of this is presented in the positional identity of the Professional Guardian, which follows in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS (II)

THE POSITIONAL IDENTITY OF THE PROFESSIONAL GUARDIAN

Introduction

This chapter delineates the position of 'Professional Guardian' within the pre-registration AHP course approval process and is illustrated through the interpretative analysis of participants' narratives. Referring to the interpretative framework Facets of Experience, presented in Chapter Four, this chapter examines the ways those who represented this position appeared to think, act, and interact connected to their involvement within the approval process. This Chapter is presented as four sections. The first section presents the Signature of the Professional Guardian, which includes identification of the Aspects or characteristics unique to this position and an illustration. The subsequent three sections discuss the three Facets of Experience: Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action, and Interactions in relation to this position.

The Signature of the Professional Guardian

The Signature of the Professional Guardian is represented by the unique characteristics and orientations within the approval process. In other words, how they might be recognised. This first section highlights the Aspects of the Professional Guardian connected to participants who appeared to adopt this position. Finally, an illustration of the Position's Signature is provided.

Aspects of the position: The Professional Guardian

The position of Professional Guardian stood out from the other three because of the residing orientation those who adopted it had towards their profession, concerned with its body of knowledge and practice. Central to the Position's modus operandi was a focus on maintaining the human link. This link was epitomised by the human bridge they created in working as educators alongside students. Within the university setting Professional Guardians were typically recognised as those individuals who expounded their subject expertise and were sought by others for advice on student matters. These proficiencies were supported by another

distinctive aspect they all held which was prior to working in HE they had commonly held substantive roles in practice. As a result, the position provided an able and unique link between profession specific degree programmes and the various sites of professional practice where students gained experience and, later, employment. As will become clear later in this chapter, within the approval process the abiding concern of Professional Guardians was centred on safeguarding the curriculum and professional knowledge that underpinned it.

In some ways, the approach of Professional Guardians was similar to Governance Trustees, in that both positions placed an emphasis on forms of duty. Yet, this similarity was only superficial since the focus of each position's loyalty differed widely. Whereas the focal point of the Governance Trustee was on fulfilling the ends of corporate governance, here emphasis was placed on making sure organisational requirements of responsiveness, efficiency and performance were met. In contrast, Professional Guardians distanced themselves from the corporate agenda in favour of their own profession's philosophies and ethical codes. In some ways, linked with these circumstances, the narratives of a Professional Guardian were tinged with conflict and compromise. The reason for this seemed to be linked to the unfamiliar business environment that the environment of HE had now become. Professional Guardians found these changing surroundings difficult since this environment presented interests that were counter to the values of those who adopted this position, which were based on ensuring that the education of AHP students equipped graduates to make an effective contribution to patient care.

The position of Professional Guardian was the most common across the data, with five of the twelve participants having adopted this way of negotiating the demands of the process. Of the five participants, two of these, Sue and Chris, were the only ones associated consistently with this position; whereas the others, May, Diane and Sandra, appeared to be at the cusp of Professional Guardian and Enabling Strategist position.

Within the arena of approval preparations and events, Sue and Chris rarely moved away from the micro locality of their department. Both had worked as AHP staff for

some time. Each had previously experienced several iterations of their course, alongside the associated approval events. Prior to becoming a university tutor, Sue told me about how she had been an experienced clinician. In fact, her manner with me suggested that she was not inclined to suffer compromises in standards of professional practice. Despite her no-nonsense exterior, Sue was also very thoughtful towards the needs of others, and it was this interest that attracted her into HE, as she put it:

> So I actually enjoyed being with students and sorting their problems out, rather than sort out problems that I could never sort out (T1:2).

In demonstrating a genuine interest in ensuring that students were supported in their development, Sue's motivation for moving into HE resonated with the position of Professional Guardian. Similarly, Chris's narrative revealed a sense of responsibility towards inspiring students to cope with the demands of practice. This was reflected by Chris's approach to learning and teaching, achieved through avoidance of packaging learning. As Chris explained, 'It's about fostering people to be able to go away and do the work themselves, as opposed to delivering the material' (Chris T1:21).

Three other people, May, Diane and Sandra, shared the positional identity of Professional Guardian. Each of these individuals was steadfast about the importance of maintaining the quality of AHP education for future graduates. However, in comparison to Sue and Chris, what was slightly different was their association with Professional Body organisations. Consequently, their network extended to the macro locality of policymaking. Diane exemplified this hybrid position. She told me how her appointment had been directed by her specialist subject knowledge. Yet, what distanced her slightly from being totally profession centric was the political astuteness she suggested in her talk about what was at risk in the process of a course securing approval. Diane demonstrated the mix of her position like this:

> I think on the whole they're (other university tutors) perhaps much more enthusiastic about what they're teaching, which is probably why they do

> want to say more. Or they want to defend what they're doing. Or they want to explain …so I think there's a slight difference there. But I do feel that on the whole they would probably feel well, it's not up to us, you know, as long as we're honest its not us who would sort of, I don't know, for want of a better phrase get into trouble. You know, if it's not approved we're there to teach (T1:7).

Whilst Diane's evaluation suggested a more political orientation, it was apparent that she did not seek any further responsibilities beyond being a lecturer. Although, generally, Professional Guardians were aware of the risky circumstances in which courses were approved, to the point of feeling protective about their course, they chose to avoid the procedural responsibilities of securing approval, understanding their remit as one of to teach.

Another Professional Guardian with blended characteristics was Sandra. Indeed, Sandra's prior experience of being a clinical manager typified Professional Guardians who were on the edge of the Enabling Strategist position. She had become interested in management after acting up for a colleague whilst working in an NHS Trust. As part of this role, Sandra was responsible for liaising with local universities in connection with post-graduate courses for AHP staff. Subsequently, she furthered this interest in being appointed as lead for education and professional development within a professional body. Despite this national role, Sandra exemplified the position of Professional Guardian due to her enthusiasm for ensuring that the professional agenda within the approval of courses was visible:

> We need to try and move as a professional body and try and make sure that in some of those fora we can help support the formative processes and discussions. Whether it's through national committees, national meetings, or helping people you know with critical friends, helping people with those dialogues. Erm, so that when we do come to approval events we've got courses that are fit for purpose. For all of the stakeholders (T1:19).

Sandra realised that the status of the Profession Bodies within approval had become displaced by the new powers of the Regulator, the HPC. She, perceptively, recognised a powerful way to influence the proposal of a course, was to do so prior

to its approval, through the support of 'formative processes' at the start of the approval journey. Clearly, development of a collective mindset and maintenance of mutuality was an important lever used by Professional Guardians.

The fifth Professional Guardian, May, also having a background working at national level for a Professional Body, presented her perspective:

> The thing that epitomises the whole of approval for me, not HPC approval, our accreditation, may be I should make that distinction… Is the opportunity for it to be the most rich learning experience. That has been a very significant part in the development of my own thinking and wisdom and that comes about because of professional debate, as opposed to being stressed! (T1:10)

May linked the approval of a course to it being a meaningful experience, which was in contrast to the exacting exercise it had become. The separation she made between the stressful officious approach of the Regulator and the inclusive approach taken to accreditation by the Professional Body is apparent in her description to me about what the approval process meant to her:

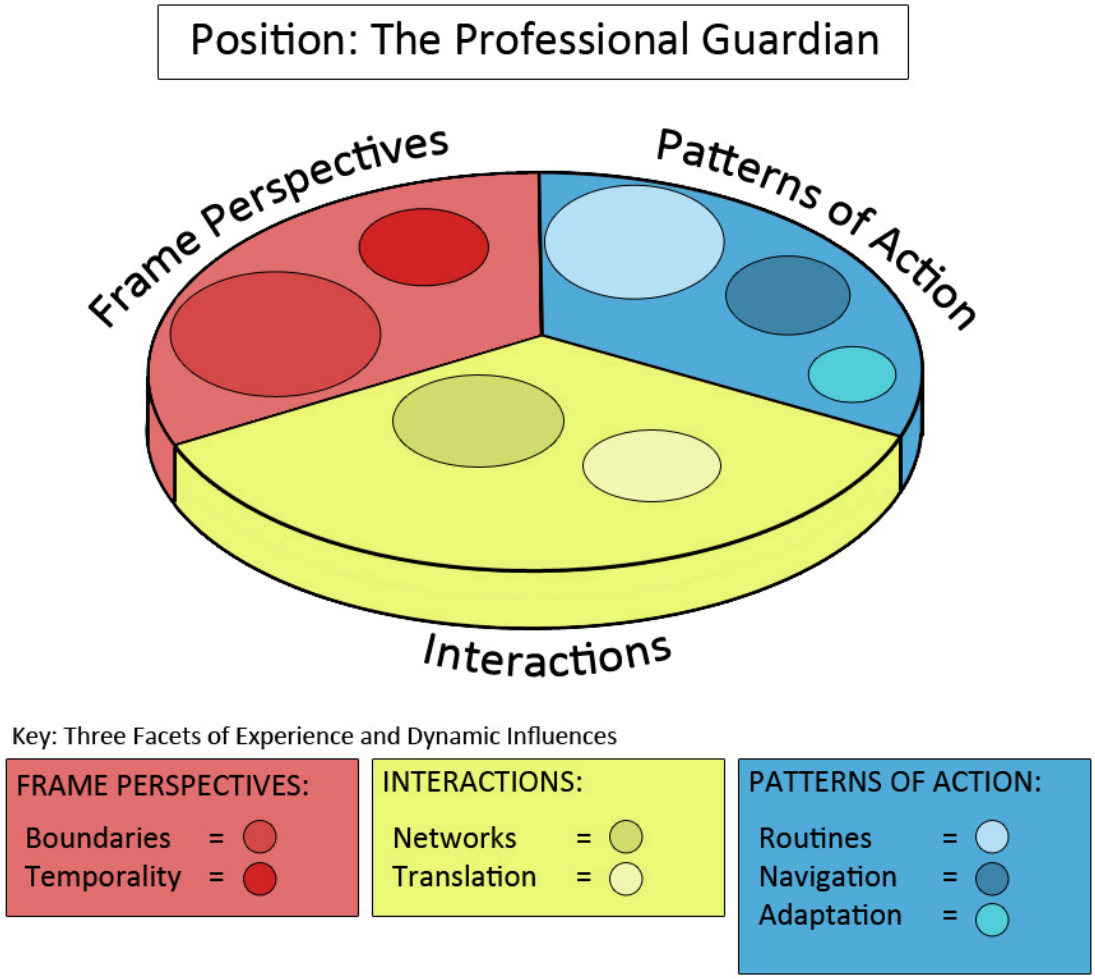
> Course approval makes me think of those small sticky dots that you put on your pulse point… Yes like a bio dot thing that changes colour… and "we all of us said to each other that we needed to stay serene"… which was green probably, and so the reason for saying that was because it demonstrated a symbol for saying that it was so stressful (T1:10)

Accreditation by a Professional Body, as opposed to approval, was taken to be a more developmental approach.

Signature of the Professional Guardian position

The Signature of the Professional Guardian is illustrated in Figure 6.1. This illustration represents each of the Facets of Positionality: Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action and Interactions. These Facets acted as overarching organising principles in relation to the data. Connected to each of these were two or three Influencing Dynamics. These differed in different degrees across each of the positional identities. Definitions of three Facets and the seven Influencing Dynamics linked with them are provided in Appendix One.

Figure 6.1. The Signature of the Professional Guardian



The Signature of the Professional Guardian suggested that the largest impact of Influencing Dynamics was from Boundaries and Temporality. The smallest influence was from Adaptation. The implications of the degree of influence by these Influencing Dynamics on the Position, alongside the others, are discussed in the next three sections of this chapter.

The Frame Perspectives of the Professional Guardian

The Frame Perspectives Facet represented how a Professional Guardian would understand or know about the environment of course approval. This worldview or way of understanding the approval process was swayed by the degree of presence the Influencing Dynamics, Boundaries and Temporality had. Each of these is delineated:

- Boundaries were understood as the Influencing Dynamic challenging the scope of understanding or thinking of those involved about the process.
- Temporality was connected with ways participants were influenced by time, how they experienced it within the approval space, and the connection of time to different spaces in the approval journey.

Boundaries: In spite of oneself

Professional Guardians were in the main staff that had substantive subject knowledge and experience. Yet, in spite of their possible status within the academic community, when it came to dealing with the demands of course approval, this position was the most accepting or passive in its outlook. Linked to this position participants' narratives seemed particularly disconcerted by the exacting requirements of approval, alongside how they understood themselves as powerless within the process. For those adopting this position this challenge may have been linked to a disconnection in worldviews, between the procedural tasks associated with course approval and the creative activities connected to course and curriculum review. The implication on the position of the Professional Guardian was that their understanding of course approval was something akin to a prescription, which they had to take and comply with. However, not all those linked to this position were equally passive. It was clear from Sandra's narrative that perhaps traditional understandings of what, historically, the approval process had consisted of, would no longer fit with the new regime:

> In some respects what you're dealing with at an approval event, you could take the view that well, that's not a formative event; it should be a summative event, because actually you're wanting to tick the box. You're wanting to see this course is fit for purpose, not this course has the potential to be fit from purpose in a year's time. So the developmental aspect should have happened before and there shouldn't be any surprises by the time you get to the approval (T1:18).

Sandra seemed to be able to demarcate the difference between approving a course and engaging in discussions about its review, this way of thinking seemed to provide a way of dealing with changes in the process.

However, this approach of separating out how approval and review were understood could mean that the purpose of a pre-registration course, in producing graduates fit for practice, could become misaligned by the procedural process of approval. For instance, Chris believed that the remit for approval of an AHP course led solely by the HPC had become limited to the health sector. Consequently, the way AHP role descriptors were defined imposed limits on knowledge, including the potential for AHPs to work outside statutory services, for example, in the Third Sector. From my own experience, employability of AHP graduates was such that newly qualified staff were indeed being employed in non-traditional areas. Whilst this was encouraging, representation from these areas as potential users and employers was not included in the current process.

There was also another way in which the worldview of both AHP staff and graduates was being bound. This issue emerged from the apparent emphasis being placed by evaluative agencies on the need for evidence-based practitioners. Sue demonstrated this shift in what she saw as the future for AHPs; a future moulded in such a way that graduates might no longer be fit for the practice into which they had chosen to enter:

> I think that the emphasis to equip students with the skills of research and evidence based practice, we do it to the hilt, but I still don't think that its seen as that significant clinically, which is why some students when they get out there clinically, are disillusioned, they're dissatisfied with the job that they've been trained for, almost like overtraining in evidence based practice (T1:6).

The above comment demonstrates how the specification of competencies and proficiency standards that formed part of the approval process appeared to be changing the nature of training away from professional practice skills, towards emphasising research skills and evidence based practice. Whilst this direction is to be upheld, it should not be furthered to the detriment of practice-based skills, such as the capacity for caring. Such an outlook made Professional Guardians uncomfortable since, as AHP subject specialists, they were clinicians who maintained an interface between the university providing pre-registration AHP courses, and the employees of graduates. The inter-relationships that the Professional Guardian had with practice were invaluable since this connection acted as a barometer to the relationship, through monitoring how courses remained grounded in the profession to which they supplied graduates.

Yet, the way Professional Guardians understood what was needed, did not always accord with what counted as a competent practitioner by the various statutory agencies approving AHP courses. As such, the way Professional Guardians understood the approval process represented mixed emotions for them. This pattern was common across all five participants associated with this position. Approval preparations and events were described as being 'stressful', as precarious situations, which involved walking 'a tightrope'. This position was the only one in which people saw the experience of course approval as something that affected them personally. As a result, due to having to restrict the emplotment of professional futures, in order to meet the ordered demands of the process, such feelings were subsumed and spilled out elsewhere, as Chris points out:

> I think, you know, it's, it's obviously much broader than just course review which I think, you know, sort of the, the topics that have come up through, through our conversation, and obviously I don't know what other people have been talking about, but for us it seems to, you know, permeate, permeate it. I don't know if that's the right term, but sort of spread through a number of different topics. Course review has afforded er, well it's a vehicle through which other things have been reflected (T2:22)

Consequently, Chris's narrative indicated that the approval process had come to affect every aspect of academic life. It seemed that the private, reflexive spaces

for discussions about course review also provided an unfettered area in which staff expressed how they felt. How Professional Guardians understood boundaries in the approval arena appeared to be as much about the capacity of those in this position to enact their own choices, as others deciding for them.

Those who adopted this position appeared to create boundaries for themselves around what was possible. In particular, the process of approval made them feel their part was of little consequence, as Sue shared, in her definition of what course approval meant:

> Badminton Horse Trials!! With that big water jump which catches riders out! Perfect. Hurdles, and traps and a final score which doesn't match your ability, but the horse's ability. A monkey could ride it, but the horse does the work. (E-mail correspondence, November 2008)

Sue's narrative suggested that those who knew and followed the track survived the system. The capacity to endure the demands of the process, though, were not based on expertise, since Sue seems to suggest that subject experts had become passengers in a process that operated regardless. Just being able to reach the end of the process was an outcome Chris raised emotively

> Um, …but yeah, fear and …it is, because its such a large beast, and a lot rides on it, um, so, not only within the university but without as well with um, um, you know, the professional body and um, other institutions, HPCs, things like that so (T1:5).

Chris suggested that not only was there much at risk in not meeting the requirements of evaluative agencies but also they had to deal with 'a large beast' which they were not in control of. Consequently, approval was becoming a task which not only those who adopted the position of Professional Guardian appeared to be threatened by, but also one in which their understanding of what the process meant was no longer warranted. Sue described it like this:

> Because to own it [the course] you have to be involved with it and that's the key part. Unless you are involved in the decision making. There's no decision making. We are at plankton level, but I am a legless plankton, which is very low, you know (T2:24).

This alienating viewpoint on the approval landscape was also reflected at national level. Professional Guardians took the view that the future presented dwindling spaces for the professional voice, including that of Professional Bodies, as May explains:

> This [a course approval event] is totally orchestrated and controlled in order to fulfil the requirements of the Regulator, the Health Professions Council. In many ways it has nothing to do with measuring quality with the aim of protecting the public (T1:2).

This comment represented the mounting feelings of disjunction between the process of approving a course and the outcome of what it means to become an AHP. Consequently, this position was characterised by one of guardianship. For the Professional Guardian, under current arrangements, the potential to lose sight of what it meant to be part of a particular profession were real. Another Influencing Dynamic creating powerful demands on Professional Guardians was time and their responsiveness to this in the spaces of the approval process.

Temporality: Multitaskers

A significant aspect of a Professional Guardian's identity was the Influencing Dynamic of Temporality. This influence was understood as how those involved were influenced by time, and the links between time and approval spaces. The influence of Temporality affected those connected to the Position by nature of them being "multitaskers". All were practitioners, academics, or a lead in education and administrators within the areas they worked. Within the approval space, this attribute of performing more than one role seemed to add a complication to the Dynamic of Temporality in two ways. Firstly, Temporality was connected to the consumption of energy. This occurred to Professional Guardians to such a level, because they were juggling so many other tasks that it affected the degree to which they were able to be involved in the approval process. Secondly, the compelling influence of aligning time-space efficiently within course approval, by this I mean completing the right activity, in the right place, at the right time, was

unintentionally used as a means to preclude staff from being involved in the process.

Within the approval journey, the capacity to move efficiently through time was the first challenge that the Dynamic Influence of Temporality presented. For the Professional Guardian, connecting time with the accomplishment of the "correct" activity was a major challenge since involvement was precluded by the energy used across the variety of other tasks they completed within their work life. Chris put it like this:

> I think the other thing that stands out really is that we were doing it alongside other activities, and therefore we were in addition to being busy with teaching, and every other, you know, all the other things that we might be involved in, we had this in addition, um, I think we were recovering from another event. I can only talk for myself really, I was tired from that, I hadn't really re-charged my batteries fully from that before then going into another, another major event (T1:6)

Whilst Chris's narrative conveyed that AHP pre-registration courses had not escaped the audit culture agenda within HE, it also highlighted the relentless occurrence and pace at which these activities occurred. Consequently, approval was understood as an event that not only consumed time, but also the energy of all those involved. Additionally, connected with the Professional Guardian, the time-space dimension of the approval experience made those who adopted this position feel vulnerable, as Chris suggests

> So to have started the process early, or earlier, seemed, was refreshing in fact, it felt like we would be able to, it was, um, um,…a monster that we could tame, um, we could deal with within the timeframe. Um, and so that was, that seemed good, we'd lots of notice to get things sorted (T1:5).

Being organised was connected with trying to abate the "monster". Yet, this was rarely the case. Whilst being efficient provided a sense of control, it also gave rise to the unintended consequences of alienating staff. Since the need to be seen as responsive and expedient within the process by others precluded the desired level of involvement by staff. Diane explained

> So it was literally something that myself and a colleague pasted together one evening because we had to do it quickly… we were looking at another form of assessment and we had to make a decision without actually even consulting with people who were involved in teaching at a partner college, so we couldn't even actually talk to them about their present assessment, we just had to use the mix and put it together the best way we could. So, you're making decisions on behalf of other staff which is not a professional thing to do and not the right way to do it (Diane T1:19)

Clearly, the time-space dimension was a troublesome consequence of efficiency. However, some staff also felt that the lack of time to become involved was also orchestrated by others. This resulted in them feeling that their action was being controlled by both the system and others' who wished to maintain power over it.

> Being cynical [laughs], there's a feeling that we're put through these things to keep us under the thumb. And that actually if you're busy [laughs], if you're busy then you can't cause trouble. So whether that's true or not, there's a sense that you know, I've got to get on with the teaching, if I'm doing any research I've got to keep that ticking along, and we've got this review event to do, so I've got to keep that going, and there's no other time to be a political animal or, you know, cause trouble, in the nicest possible way [laughter] (Chris T1:14).

Whilst Chris's narrative demonstrated the demanding nature of external monitoring mechanisms on staff working in universities, the sub-text hinted at other controls also operating in HE. Chris, somewhat nervously identified, by the laughter, that involvement of some individuals was perceived as troublesome. As a result, they were kept under control beneath 'the thumb' of others through being kept busy. The notion of "being kept busy" was perceived as a cover for dissuading involvement and reduced possibilities for individuals to be 'political animals', through opposing proposals or directives during approval preparations. Findings from the data indicated that Chris was not alone; indeed, others experienced this form of time control constraint on involvement more obviously. Sue similarly insinuated how she felt forced to complete the process before she and colleagues, had time to consult one another:

> We had one afternoon where the whole course, well it was ticked off really, and it wasn't; people were upset because they weren't allowed to say,

> "what does anybody else think about this assessment for this module you know, I'm not too sure about it, what do you think? (T1:20)

This perspective was affirmed by another Professional Guardian, who from their experience seemed to believe that time was also channelled and orchestrated at the approval event itself.

> And in a way module leaders were almost, I mean at that event I mentioned you know they, you were told well you've got five minutes to talk about this. And it was really [laughs] I mean there was no room for sort of much discussion out of that (Diane T1:15).

Diane's view was typical of the Professional Guardian who commonly attributed control in the process of course approval to someone else. Those whose job it was to implement the approved course were seemingly alienated. Furthermore, discussions about curriculum and pedagogy, so central to the everyday work of this position, were being reduced to a perfunctory duty.

Patterns of Action of the Professional Guardian

The Facet Patterns of Action, identified as an organising principle within the interpretative framework, presented in Chapter Four, portrayed how action was understood and organised by positional identities within the approval space. Patterns of Action were explicated by three Influencing Dynamics: Routines, Navigation and Adaptation. This section focuses specifically on how the position of Professional Guardian managed these Dynamics, which are discussed in turn, here.

Routines: Procedural constraints

The Dynamic of Routines presented as the potential effect of constraint(s) within the arena of course approval. Routines were the enactment of Boundaries and represented the ways restrictions in thinking were managed. For example, regulatory policy provided a description of how the process of AHP courses was to

be understood by those involved. The use of "Routines" or managerialist practices, such as audit, is evidence of the nature of that type of worldview.

Apart from the Governance Trustee position, Professional Guardians' experienced the Dynamic of Routines most intensely. Unlike Governance Trustees, whose background compelled them to ensure that procedures were adhered to, Professional Guardians possessed greater autonomy, however, they took the stance of being done-to by the system. Rather than making Routines work for them, as in the case of the Enabling Strategist position discussed later, Professional Guardians were submissive. In fact, Professional Guardians considered Routines as unavoidable and this affected them personally. This was shown through the emotive descriptions, which they shared about what happened to them and 'their' course/profession during the approval journey. Overall, Professional Guardians were unable to manage the Dynamic of Routines. Consequently, those who adopted this position crossed few boundaries. Instead, the Dynamic of Routines represented a series of procedural constraints.

One of the marked Routines that were becoming changed in the approval process was a move by several of the evaluative agencies towards a paper-based re-approval and accreditation of courses. The implication of this change was that there was no longer a face-to-face meeting between staff and the panel. It seemed this approach was increasingly contested as being inefficient and deemed outmoded. Sandra, who worked at national level representing her profession, related how the methods used in approval of AHP courses was changing:

> It is interesting that so much of these things now are going to paper and you need to be quite skilled and knowledgeable, and actually have quite a broad experience of doing these kind of events on the ground to be able to unpick the paper. So we are having to train people to read the paper (T1:9).

Sandra commented on how the process was becoming increasingly focussed on what she termed the 'paper'. By implication this change suggested participation by staff in the approval process of their own course, could result in them being alienated. Emphasis on procedural intent, rather than reasoned debate, meant that approval

could become an exclusive event. In such circumstances, only those with the "right" type of knowledge would be able to participate. As a counter measure, Sandra spoke of how the PB was 'training' people to read the documents. Using this tactic meant participants, such as Reviewers for the PB itself, could deal with these practical constraints and remain actively engaged in the process. Whilst Sandra remained open minded about what had to be done, May was more cynical about the methods in use:

> HPC Approval feels like a lowest common denominator approach, which in my opinion means that protection of the public is really not addressed in a sufficiently robust way (T1:8).

May appeared not only to question the methodology of approval, but also highlighted a recurrent issue throughout this study of how the process of approval had become disconnected from its purpose. She went on to share another concern connected to the representativeness of HPC panel members. May was concerned by her understanding related to procedures about the composition of HPC approval panels. The problem was that it was possible for none of these representatives to be a member of the PB of the named profession degree being considered, as May put it:

> Not all HPC [the Regulator] visitors are members of their PB [professional body] and it was difficult to imagine therefore, how they were able to articulate the current and future perspectives of [name of profession] from a national perspective. Clear blue water is one thing but well informed visitors, as HPC reps, is quite another (T1:8).

In particular, though May believed impartiality of the approval panel was important the rules and consequent practices operating over the situation were problematic. Separation between the mandate for approval of quality processes and assuring quality of education could ensue to such a degree this may lead to the professional view becoming diluted and sidelined. At greater risk was the potential for what it meant to be an AHP, to be altered significantly since, if the PB no longer had the power to approve a course, including the proposed curriculum, then the implication was the HPC as government proxy had more scope to ensure that the role descriptor better fitted requirements of the state.

Constraints imposed by Routines, as rule-based practices within the approval system were also raised by participants who adopted this positional identity at department level.

> You know, there's so much is in the paperwork, which doesn't necessarily tell you about the quality of provision. For me it's going through this process of having so many meetings for this, so many for that, having the right minutes, the right paperwork. And it's become even more important, because we're talking about universities competing in terms of offering the provision for some courses (Diane T1:23).

Diane's narrative interestingly reflected what Sandra observed was happening from a national perspective. In essence, the purpose of ensuring that the quality of education within pre-registration courses was being developed had been overcome by efficient processes. This issue underpins the notion that current methodology used to underpin the process encourages staff to meet specified standards, rather than substantiate how these proposals are warranted educationally and professionally. The implication of this trend in the practice of approval was that the current process missed the point of providing pre-registration at the optimum standard. These circumstances, for staff whose value-base was in part connected to purposefulness, probably felt thwarted in understanding the rationale, which sustained the current process. As a result, the positional identity of Professional Guardian typically questioned the approach taken. However, greater concern was linked not only to doubts about the process, but also how this was connected by some to their own credibility.

> Oh this sounds awful, because the documentation was, I thought, good, there wasn't a lot to be picked up on, there weren't any glaring omissions you know, I'd done the mapping, I'd followed the instructions, every box was ticked, so I had done the documentation properly. I thought it was a big anti-climax and a big let down that I hadn't been tested to my capabilities (Sue T1:16).

Despite Sue following the rules as directed, she did not receive any satisfaction through undergoing the process even though her course was successfully approved. Similarly, Chris shared how the obviousness of justifying that a course was fit for purpose, for instance through mapping learning outcomes, had made course

documents stark of any qualitative information regarding what the real learning experience was about. Chris compared the process to being like a bingo game 'it's very you know eyes down, I've got 12 weeks of lectured du,du,du,du (T1:15)'.

> Well it's sort of playing the game isn't it? Sort of because you know, you might have three learning outcomes for each module, but are they written in such a way that they don't mean anything? What's the hidden agenda? And I know that's something, you know, what's hidden beneath the surface? What else are you doing? (Chris T1:15).

Chris not only questioned the efficacy of approval but also seemed to associate it with micropolitics. In other words, the authenticity of the process was becoming dubious, due to the incentives to reach the targets of the process being valued more than the purpose itself. Achieving targets had little to do with the real purpose and practice of educating future health professionals. Instead, it was more about how those involved in approval were able to move successfully around the arena to suit their interests. The next section moves on to examine the capacities of this position to move around.

Navigation: Controlling manoeuvres

Whilst Professional Guardians possessed the potential to be powerful, due to their authoritative knowledge and experience in their subject area, their forms of power had become contested. Although subject expertise was valued within the approval process, its presence had become controlled. A key factor was the mistrust of professionals, created as a result of numerous national scandals within health and social care. In particular, this mistrust had mandated government intervention through increasing forms of external monitoring. Particularly amongst the academia, there was a sense that contribution by subject staff was being channelled in certain ways. In this study experience of AHP staff was no different. For those participants who adopted the position of Professional Guardian, though they portrayed having the potential for scope to further their own direction, this was limited by two problems: the manoeuvres of those stakeholders who, in a pluralist regulatory system, held more power, and also upholding what now counted

as expedient professional curricula due to political constraints. The manoeuvres of the Professional Guardian were, therefore, controlled.

As a Professional Guardian at national level, Sandra was able to see the overall landscape of course approval. Sandra typified the position, and the first problem, in describing a situation in which PBs were being crowded by other stakeholders:

> SHAs are the commissioners so they've got a big say, they look at the growing influence of Skills for Health. The government is quite clear about what it wants, particularly in England. We've got the HPC that's quite clear, you may disagree with them, but they're quite clear about their approval processes. And we were then into this, what could be perceived as quite a crowded environment with a lot of conflicting priorities (T1:5).

Sandra gave the impression that it was becoming more difficult for PBs to find space within the approval arena. That is to say that Navigation by a Professional Guardian was challenged by conflicting priorities. The space was now also having to be shared to meet the necessities of securing funding from Commissioners, matching courses to employer requirements', dealing with the statutory powers of the Regulator and, not least, the university in which the course was situated. Others associated with this position illustrated how the role of their PB had become less important.

> They're [the professional body] toothless tigers really. They have their guidelines but it's the HPC who are the biggest influence. [Name of professional body removed] they're our professional body, they're the club, but the HPC are the regulators which, they're the ones who have the most influence (Sue T1:12).

Interestingly Sue identified her PB as 'the club', denoting it as selective but, also, that it had become an ineffectual group that was part of another era. From the narratives, whether Professional Guardians believed that they were a group that was to become obsolete was not identified. However, what became clear was the belief that kinds of manoeuvrability within the process they had been used to, was changing. May highlighted how the moves of staff were completely different when having to meet the standards of the Regulator, compared to the collegial debate with professional peers in accreditation. In contrast with the latter approach, May

observed how 'The expectation of the Regulator towards approval is of a smooth process, where only exceptions make the headlines' (T1:4). Here it was apparent that controlling ways debate could be navigated supported an efficient systems approach. Any hiatus, for instance, caused by discussion was not tolerated since this not only extended the duration of the event, an indicator probably placed on the Regulator by government, but also meant dialogue drifted away from what could be measured.

The second problem which Professional Guardians experienced that challenged their movements was demonstrated in the requirements for expedient professional curriculum. Expediency of curriculum to meet the needs of employers and guarantee the management of risk was an imperative. These requests increasingly resulted in tenuous connections with what the professions were about, or could be, for the Professional Guardian. Some staff seemed uneasy with the consequences that they perceived common core and inter-professional strands would have on opportunities for movement in teaching professional knowledge. Sue reflected on how she saw the changes, 'Yeah, it totally detracts from [AHP title]. A lot of the skills of [name of profession] have had to go to make way for these other modules (T1:7)'. Whilst one of the primary reasons for emphasis on inter-professional, common core elements was geared towards the need for closer working between the professions the reality of navigating this at local level in this study was different.

> The common core modules are just so big that it's like herding cats. It is so out of control because of the number of disciplines that are involved. It's an impossible task to get it sorted out, get it done and get everybody in line, so that the students have the same experience, that is very difficult. You're getting module leaders who have done it for three or four years just breaking down saying 'I can't do it anymore' (Sue T1:7)

Following national directives had led to false economies, such as large cohorts of students being placed together in order to deliver a 'common' learning experience. Commonly, for Professional Guardians, their perspective of these changes was that as a result of the need for expediency in fulfilling stakeholder wishes, parts of professional curricula were compressed in order for common, inter-professional

teaching to fit. Due to the complexity of the task, the development with colleagues of a coherent learning experience felt insurmountable.

Navigation by Professional Guardians within the scope of professional curriculum was also politically constrained. The data revealed recurrent narratives describing how staff felt compelled to work within the limits of their organisation's rubric to ensure proposed learning experiences and content, aligned with expectations across HE. Within this study, Professional Guardians viewed the directive of altering the credit structure from 15 to 20 credits in modules particularly constricting. These alterations had been initiated through the Bologna Process and were, in simple terms, focussed on harmonisation across the European Higher Education Area. However, at local level Professional Guardians interpreted this as a further quelling of discipline pedagogy, in which professional curriculum was being 'squeezed' into decreasing spaces. From those connected to the identity of Professional Guardian the notion of choice(s) in direction was absent. Rather than understanding this as an opportunity their understanding was that content was being marginalised and consequently had to be re-organised, often artificially.

> You know, so some have been put together quite artificially in really I think quite unmanageable sized modules. I think it does appear to students that perhaps things have just been added on to a module and that they don't necessarily fit in very well (Diane T1:20).

Diane's frustration was clear. What was the value in bolting on ad hoc chunks of content that had no coherence with the overall learning experience? The implications on student learning were of fragmentation, superficial learning and potential erosion of understanding what the core skills of a profession were. In addition, Sue's anxiety at the dilution of space for professional knowledge and skills are plain. The sense of disempowerment in her own stance is clear as she portrays a scenario of these skills being worn away, yet not in an explicit way, almost insidiously such that this action may go unchallenged or noticed by others:

> I'm quite happy with modules, but it's this persistent trying to cram yet something more into the system that may be somebody needs to think, well what are the core skills here, you know. We're grinding away at them and

> you know, undermining them and eroding them so much that a lot of stuff has gone. (T1:8)

Although Professional Guardians may have believed they were experts, their subsequent interpretations of the processes connected to approval events indicated that, in fact, they were increasingly defensive in the face of change. Whilst the espoused style of Professional Guardians, as May epitomised earlier, was of open spaces in which course teams could independently articulate and reason their ideas the reality of this approach was different. Although those connected to this position consistently talked of how approval events were driven by government and national policy, Professional Guardians, themselves, seemed reluctant to take responsibility for change. This constraint may have been linked to the Dynamic of Adaptation that is considered next.

Adaptation: Like a stick in the mud

Apart from the Governance Trustee, the position of Professional Guardian was the least adaptive. When proposals and mechanisms for approval did not match with their aspirations, those associated with this position were disconcerted, they seemed disinclined to use their initiative and as if 'like a stick in the mud' their approach remained static and outlook narrow. The identity of Professional Guardian found it difficult to adapt because of how they chose to manage the Influencing Dynamics around them. In these situations, the inability to adjust, to represent the proposed course in the way required, made the overall process for this position troublesome.

Possibly, due to their roles in professional bodies at national level, May and Sandra were the least concerned by the need to be adaptive. Whilst they consistently raised issues with the approval system, they represented the mainstay of the profession and, because they were accountable to the PB, were probably more prepared to take issue.

> Certainly there were some things that were coming through that the university was requiring, or was pushing that as a professional body you might say for the greater good of the profession, I'm not sure I would really

> want that. It wasn't anything major, and it was anything that would stop the course being approved, but taking a very broad strategic view about the development of the profession, there were some things that were being encouraged. I don't know, I'm not sure that that's quite what we would want (Sandra T1:7).

Somewhat oppositionally, Sandra highlighted how universities were failing to take a strategic view on professional futures. Yet, she appeared hesitant about how this might be resolved. There might be various reasons; one might be due to the predicament caused by the different motivations underpinning involvement by the Regulator and universities; the former concerning compliance with baseline standards, and the latter with efficient, cost effective delivery of a course.

At local level, the position of Professional Guardian interpreted this mix of drivers between stakeholders in the process with difficulty. This confusing set of circumstances led to those adopting this position feeling detached and unable to adapt to requirements. The most obvious disconnection was, as Diane identified, through not knowing what the process and the role of reviewers was about. She appeared to acquiesce by stating 'it would probably make the process easier to understand if you had actually done the training yourself' T1:15). In keeping with this position, Chris explained the situation more personally:

> You know, you've just got to do enough to get through as opposed to sort of striving for the best that you can do, because you haven't got the resources, personal and physical resources to be able to get to that level (T1:7).

Rather than choosing to achieve the desired level of involvement by putting on a different face Chris chose to survive the process since the wherewithal to adapt was lacking.

Similarly, in other areas colleagues unable to change their circumstances presented frustration visibly. Sue illustrated this in her observation of preparations for approval as staff 'vying for space, so there was a lot of unrest because who was going to be el supremo module leader, they all wanted it because that meant they could at least have some power of what was included' (T1:19). More disconcerting was Sue's subsequent reflection, of an 'enormous balloon waiting to burst' (T2:17).

In essence, where there seemed to be no possibilities for change, rather than attempt to overcome the Influencing Dynamics presented, those adopting this position were inclined to become individualistic and defensive. Such circumstances do not bode well for upholding the entitlement, as a collective, to the envisioning of professional futures. The final section in this chapter, examines how the Professional Guardian understood the Facet of experience linked to Interactions within the course approval process.

Interactions of the Professional Guardian

Interactions represent the final Facet of Experience in the process of course approval. This Facet represented scope for different forms of interaction, which each positional identity undertook with others. It is constituted by two Influencing Dynamics, Networks and Translation these are addressed next, in turn.

Networks: Ambiguous connections

In this study, Networks emerged as the differing capacity of each positional identity to optimise the connections they may, or may not have with others around them, within the process. The narratives of Chris, Sue, Diane, May and Sandra portrayed their network(s) as primarily being subject orientated. Whilst liaison with administrators, senior managers and representatives of evaluative agencies for those working at national level was not uncommon, for those in the locality of a department this interface was rare. Perhaps influenced by their multidisciplinary background from practice, the Professional Guardian position was commonly orientated towards collaborative relationships characterised by collegial exchange. Consequently, within course approval the networks of the Professional Guardian were observed in spite of the nature of the event. Or rather, those adopting this position did not forge networks in order to pursue an objective, such as the Enabling Strategist, but were interested in furthering authentic relationships with others linked to professional interests. Their historical mindset of the Professional Guardian about Networks was at odds with the time-limited, fixed term nature of course approval. Consequently, those adopting the position had mixed encounters

with others. Overall, such experiences represented ambiguous, conflicting connections that contributed to an overall sense of disenchantment with the course approval process. Chris exemplified these conflicting circumstances:

> In previous events it's seemed to bring the team together and it was nice, that we could work so well together, sort of working in parallel so it sort of brought us together. I mean this time it didn't feel in that way. Certain bits did but there was a much more of a tension this time compared to previous times (T1:8).

Whilst the approval process presented time to be together, Chris identified how, latterly, experiences were characterised by tension amongst colleagues. Chris also believed that colleagues' angst was due to underlying issues, not addressed properly in the department because they had been pushed to one side. Such circumstances reflect the demise in value of collegial connections in health and educational institutions; instead, these seem to have become undermined by the impetus to achieve outcomes supported by efficient structures. Consequently, in this study time for debate and critical exchange was unfamiliar, sometimes leading to irritation 'there's a limit to how much you can take and when you feel undermined, do you bite your tongue or do you speak out' (Chris T1:8). Indeed, within the officious process itself, there seemed to be an assumption that supportive networks were unnecessary.

> There was no guidance and no support as to how to do it [prepare for course approval], because there's an assumption that just because its on your list of things to do, you know how to do it, and a lot of us have learnt the hard way, that its unpleasant to do it. No good sending an email it was irrelevant, a lot of staff didn't even know what terms meant, let alone do it. So I think there was a lack of support and guidance and putting things into place, the support network was just missing (Sue T1:21).

Sue spoke of the isolation she experienced and the taken for granted approach towards the compilation of course documents. Indeed, reliance on e-mail communication provided minimal scope to agree a collective interpretation, or allay anxieties about the process with like-minded others.

Sandra highlighted other forms of detachment which arose from AHP courses not always being located within heath faculties. Such a scenario could lead to haziness about whether it was permissible, or necessary, to include a Professional Body in approval since a university may identify the Regulator and themselves as the only required parties. Not only within the approval network was there a lack of familiarity with professional bodies, PBs themselves were also perceived by some as a problem, which led to their right of a place in the process being misunderstood. May explained how colleagues in education often quoted the professional body to suit their own purpose, to create a suitable barrier against fulfilling procedures 'This has resulted in HEIs viewing the PB negatively, as being overly demanding and interfering with legitimate HEI business' (T1:9).

May and Sandra, working at national level, identified the importance of not being deterred from maintaining and managing the Influencing Dynamic of different kinds of Networks. Yet, May was distrustful of the motivations underlying these:

> PBs are invited to professional liaison groups. Too often this feels like a strategy that agencies use to infer PB agreement with their proposals, rather than an honest appraisal of what has been contributed. Policy makers and other agents like HPC, view PBs as silo driven and protective of the status quo, difficult to deal with. They therefore try to control us or sideline us (T1:10)

Whilst on the surface professional bodies appeared to be part of networks, for example, to consult on approval processes, May's narrative suggested a false collegiality amongst stakeholders. In fact, in reality, it was the nature of this collegiality that provided a source of irritation, and represented power that needed to be managed. This unwillingness to comply was a facet of the Professional Guardian defending subject interests against what they perceived as the encroaching compliance required in corporate life. It was linked to their difficulties for Translation.

Translation: A mission impossible

Translation was the Dynamic connected to capabilities of those involved in the process to interact with others from unfamiliar spaces. The influence of Translation was a mission, which staff connected to the Professional Guardian position found impossible. This position represented the bastion of professional knowledge and as a result, it was unsurprising that they found Translation within approval preparations and events posed several difficulties for how they saw Interaction.

A primary issue was that those associated with this position believed the structures and terms used in the process appeared to be meaningless. Sandra described her first encounter with a course document as 'a bit of a shock' (T:10). She shared her understanding of approval as a complex process which, unless you had been part of it at the start, presented huge challenges 'you know it's like every organisation it has its own language culture' (T1:11). However, she was pragmatic and believed there was no choice but to engage as best she could, or else have the PB disappear from the approval arena.

However, others adopting the position were disinclined to convert their understanding of the approval process for several reasons. Firstly, due to unfamiliar terms and environment Translation was difficult. Chris commented how converting the teams' understanding of a course into the 'approval speak' of learning outcomes was a meaningless exercise. This led some colleagues to opt out, assuming their input was inconsequential whatever they did. Chris went on to reflect how messages of what was required were also misunderstood; describing a scenario where a course member's proposals were rejected by a senior manager, in effect these 'felt out of kilter with what was supposed to be happening' (T2:10). Although staff were passionate about their subject and keen to advance ideas this made them vulnerable to what Chris described as 'walking the plank on behalf of everyone else' (T2:10).

Within the immediate environs of the approval arena, as a result of their difficulties in becoming lost in Translation a rare aspect of the Professional Guardian was the attempt to employ others to help them.

> But the clinical educators didn't speak out at all. Now if we'd have discussed it during the clinical visits I'm sure they would have done. Because we discuss the performance of students and they would be critical if a student didn't know some information. So I do feel that even though these are experienced managers within the NHS, that they seem within [profession name], quite reluctant to actually speak out at these more formal events (Diane T1:10).

Diane shares her angst about service managers, whose views she believed would have far greater weight with the approval panel than her own. Yet, in the unfamiliar context of the event, even those experienced practitioners were unable to translate their own understanding of what was important.

Another problem this position had with the Influencing Dynamic of Translation was that the professional perspectives they held and how this was converted by stakeholders, such as NHS Commissioners, was completely different. Sandra explained that a key role for her profession was to educate others to look after themselves, however, this perspective meant 'there are conflicts because commissioners of services want people to be churned through, they want numbers' (T1:13). In effect, even Sandra's own interpretation did not fit with the prevailing circumstances. Her profession's perspective was not part of the curative, medical model that frequently created dependent service users. However, not achieving widespread acceptance concerning the purpose of AHPs raised another exception.

The final issue that affected how Professional Guardians chose not to overcome issues in Translation was because they simply did not want to engage in it. Those who might be considered most orthodox, the Professional Guardians, Chris and Sue, highlighted the increasing business orientation of HE. This was strange to them creating a barrier to Translation.

Sue shares a scenario:

> Did you go to that meeting with those funding people attending? I was horrified that they felt that they had that much influence. On our processes, our thinking. I found that a big, a big surprise. I had no idea that they felt they'd got that much power to influence what we were actually teaching, you know, they're not in the system, they don't know what's good enough for our students and I thought that was really unnerving (T1:11).

Sue's response represents the Professional Guardian, she appears personally invaded by a different kind of stakeholder not encountered before, the Commissioner. By virtue of their preferred location at course level, those adopting this position had little exposure to the changing politics in organisations including the current frame of production imposed by customers, the external stakeholders.

In contrast, Chris's exposure to this new context was passive, but also disruptive. Chris's approach to translation in these circumstances was not to engage in it; it seemed by attempting to do so, might compromise what professional education was about.

> I think we need to recognise we're not necessarily, we're not a business in the business sense, but we're in education and that's different. We can operate some of them [procedures in approval and audit], but we need to be mindful that in education although we've got a product that we're producing the products are people (Chris T1:20).

Whilst Chris recognised the needs for efficiency and effectiveness, he proposed that the business model created a disconnection with what it meant to be, and become, a healthcare professional. Educating students to work with people required skilful professionalism, rather than just an objective process.

Summary

Unlike the other positional identities recognised in this research, for Professional Guardians the experience of course approval was the most challenging. Participants who adopted this identity represented the antithesis to all that external monitoring in its inspectoral guise was about. The presence of the Professional Guardian ensured that a platform for professional issues and the body of knowledge of

professions' presented was still maintained as a central issue. Despite being the approach that emerged as being most common in the study, this identity was the least powerful in managing the process. Professional Guardians seemed unprepared to challenge and navigate the nature of the metanarratives that surrounded them. Perhaps that was part of the problem since challenging the grand narratives in approval could imply that such staff would need to address some of their own certainties and embrace dissensus. An example of how this dilemma was cleverly managed is portrayed by the positional identity recognised as the Enabling Strategist, presented in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS (III)

THE POSITIONAL IDENTITY OF THE ENABLING STRATEGIST

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the position of Enabling Strategist in the course approval process with reference to the interpretative framework Facets of Experience. It is organised into four sections. The first section reveals the Signature of the Enabling Strategist as a position in approval preparations and events. It provides a narrative image of the position along with an illustration of its Signature. The subsequent three sections follow a similar structure to the preceding chapters and discuss each of the Facets in turn, namely, Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action, and Interactions.

The Signature of the Enabling Strategist

This initial section, supported by participants' narratives, introduces the Aspects or characteristics of the Enabling Strategist position. In addition, an illustration of the Enabling Strategist Signature is provided.

Aspects of the position: The Enabling Strategist

The Enabling Strategist position was, largely, adopted by staff employed in manager-academic roles. Overall, those who represented the position of Enabling Strategist in the study were individuals who were strategic political operators, adept at anticipating the moves of others around them. In addition, whilst those connected to this position might be considered as intimidating, they were interested in supporting others to present themselves and their ideas. In this sense, participants who adopted this position were both skilled in developing the long view, as well as incorporating the attributes of other staff in order for this vision to be realised. Such an approach, typically, secured beneficial outcomes for their areas of responsibility; as such, they were being both 'enabling' and 'strategic'.

Connected to the arena of course approval, the Enabling Strategist was characterised by an emphasis on calculated, deliberate action, thus ensuring the desired target of gaining (re)approval was secured. The acquisition of approval,

alongside the recognition this brought, for both the course team and host institution, was paramount. For Enabling Strategist's the predominant elements included execution of leadership and management skills together with an ability to see beyond the immediacy of events. Further, based on insider intelligence gained as reviewers for evaluative agencies, for example the Regulator, the Enabling Strategist possessed expertise in presenting proposals that were more likely to find acceptability with these agencies. Supported by perceptive and flexible interpersonal abilities, those associated with this position showed a flair for eliciting and shaping the ideas of staff, alongside confidence to foresee and articulate likely professional futures.

Three of the participants, Alex, Janet and Sylvia, were associated with this position, Sylvia most consistently. Alex and Janet were on the cusp of Professional Guardian. This was because their narratives echoed concerns of threats towards professional knowledge, alongside how the development of this could be limited in the future. Of the three participants, Sylvia was explicitly task orientated and focused more on how approval contributed towards fulfilling corporate goals. Taken to the furthest extent the latter approach could verge on the position of Governance Trustee. Either way all three showed a capacity to sacrifice their own individual thinking in order to attain collective benefit. Yet, this did not compromise the leadership role and control of course teams associated with this position during approval preparations and events. The implication of these aspects was that the participants as "individuals" in the study were quite challenging to discern.

Preliminary analysis of the narratives revealed that a background as a senior clinician and manager-academic was a consistent aspect of the Enabling Strategist. Janet described how, prior to working in HE, she had been a service manager. Similarly, Alex and Sylvia had been senior clinicians with supervisory responsibilities. All seemed to understand working as a tutor within a university as an opportunity. Sylvia described her move like this:

> I'd become a senior therapist and I was in charge of either the wards or the department, in quite a short period of time and actually I got quite bored. I got to the stage where I was sort of looking for something so, in a kind of nice way, this came out of the blue and it suited me at the time. Well I really missed it [clinical practice] when I first went into teaching and so what I did for a couple of years was, I used to go back and do locum covers for my boss when she was away on holiday. So I went back into practice, and then eventually the students almost took the place of the patients (T1:1).

The above narrative illustrates two points of interest. Firstly, Sylvia's comment reflects the rapid career progression to a supervisory position that was commonly associated with the Enabling Strategist position. Additionally highlighted, here, is Sylvia's openness towards new challenges and strategic mindfulness towards the importance of maintaining clinical skills, which she supports here in a planned way. Secondly, there is a further underlying meaning to what Sylvia says about how students replaced her patients, which indicated an underlying power dynamic. Here, Sylvia appeared to be making an association with the power and control she held in practice, between herself and her patients. As a therapist, her patients perceived her as an expert; she would advise on what was best. Perhaps the students replaced the need to receive acknowledgement in this way. This theme is revisited in one of Sylvia's subsequent narratives about her leadership of staff within approval events, which will be examined in the second section of this chapter, related to the Facet, Patterns of Action.

In comparison to the other three positions, the Enabling Strategist perceived course approval more pragmatically. In fact, there was a sense of 'needs must'; in other words, undertaking what was expedient, irrespective of the personal cost to themselves, to receive a positive judgment on their course. In fact, displacement of their own identities in order to portray a favourable image, consistent with surrounding circumstances, was common. For instance, throughout Alex's narrative, she consistently signposted when she was speaking from her own personal stance compared with her role as manager-academic, for example, 'I suppose if I take it from my own personal perspective' (T1:4); 'From a personal perspective here, as being me, as opposed to my role' (T1:11). Similarly, Sylvia recollected how, influenced by her own upbringing, one of her guiding principles was that unless she

had anything nice to say, then it was best not say anything at all. Whilst this principle is commendable it also infers the capacity to be disingenuous, should circumstance warrant it.

In keeping with this sense of face-saving or course saving approaches, which were adeptly used by Enabling Strategists, those who adopted this position defined approval in ways that suggested a perfunctory attitude towards the proceedings. As exemplified here:

> Course approval is about education as in big 'E' as in Higher Education, with professional and statutory or regulatory bodies, coming together to approve the nature of a programme to ensure that it is meeting the standards that are set to enable graduates to be fit for the award of a degree(Alex T1:9).
>
> Rubber stamp (Janet T1:16).
>
> I think it [approval] is a formal process of checking that all of the criteria and the requirements of the different groups are properly met in an organised and a systematic manner (Sylvia T1:6).

Indeed, the outlook of Enabling Strategists was not dissimilar from Professional Guardians, in which the idea of course approval was associated with the act of rubber-stamping and getting the relevant boxes ticked (see exemplar narratives of Sue and Alex, Chapter Six). The Professional Guardian understood "rubber stamping" as a method to support the impetus for efficiency, which consequently displaced their involvement. Whereas, Alex, Janet and Sylvia deliberately depersonalised the process due to the threat the process presented not only to the curriculum but, ultimately, to student numbers and academics' jobs. Therefore, in keeping with the nature of the Enabling Strategist position, emotional detachment allowed any necessary actions, not always well received by others, to be impartially executed.

The officiousness of Enabling Strategists, to others, could be considered as intimidating. However, what also became clear was that they were also keen to capture and support any innovative ideas from their staff.

> I would still encourage course teams to look at innovative practice, and still provide a sound rationale to keep the freshness of the programme going, to give it still a bit of uniqueness, for you know, the course team (Alex T1:13).

Alex's comment characterised the duality of the approval process through which curriculum review was creatively managed to support contemporaneousness of the course, and fit within the benchmark standards specified. The primary duty of the Enabling Strategist was to be a strategic operator through steering a course through the necessary requirements; however, they also recognised the limitations of their own contribution and, as a result, accessed other staff. In keeping with this position, there were also other reasons for doing this as Janet explains:

> Well that's it but you have to, if other people are carrying it [course delivery] out and they always are, you've got to have that level of buy-in. Although I do think that it's helpful if the leader who's got their finger in all the pies is then leading cause you can just make the tweaks and things (T2:7).

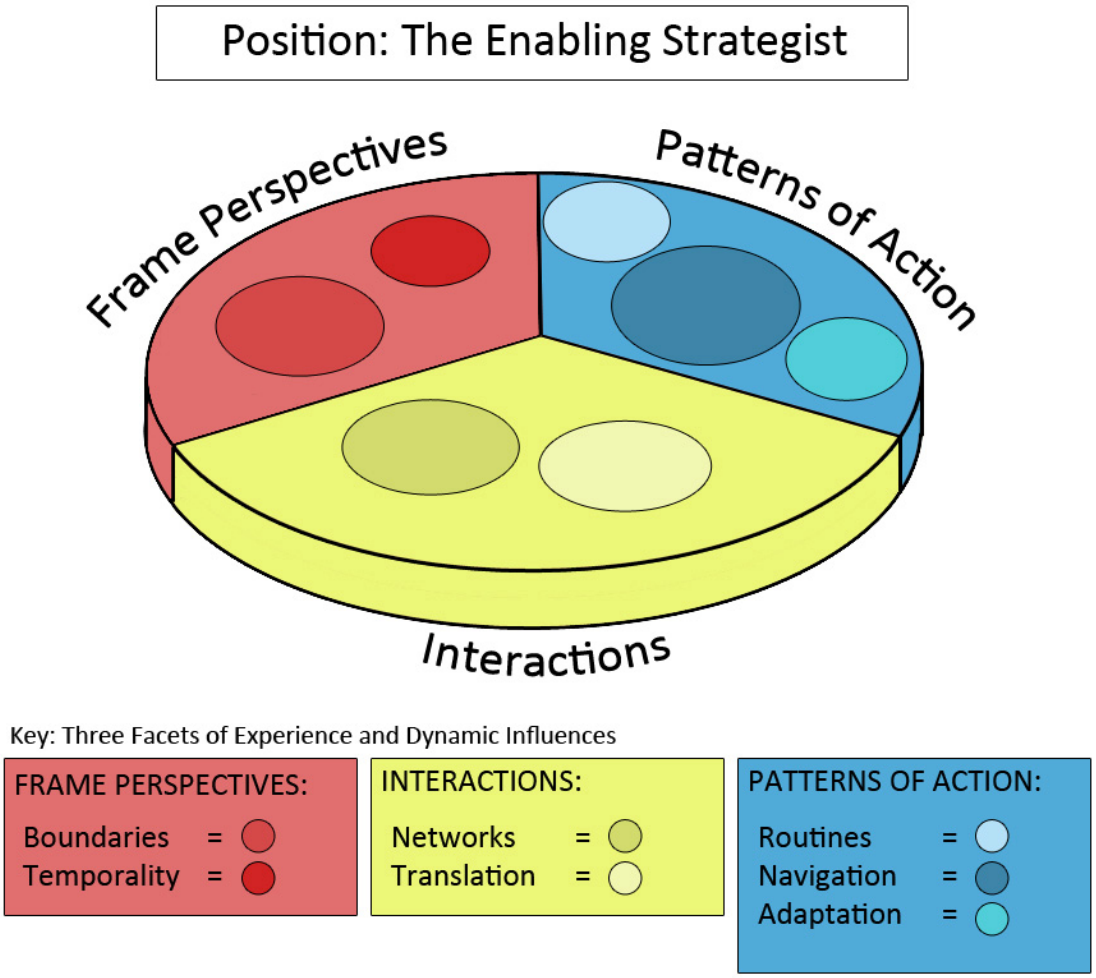
Janet's statement indicated her considered approach towards bringing staff on side with her, particularly since they were the people that would be implementing the proposed course in working directly with students. Whilst Enabling Strategists were prepared to lead by example, the teaching was, undertaken by less senior staff, in this study primarily by Professional Guardians. Janet qualified her standpoint by implying how a leader has to have interests "in all the pies" beyond their own subject. Under these circumstances, such action frees Enabling Strategists to be alert and offer timely responses to any mandates issued by those holding power in the approval process.

Overall, the Enabling Strategist, reflected by manager-academics, held accountability for getting a course approved. Subsequently, other staff might typically perceive them as authoritative. This was perhaps because Enabling Strategists frequently had to make unpalatable decisions, for example, choosing between the creative aspirations of course team members and fulfilling the benchmark standards and prescribed structures in which courses seeking (re)approval are situated.

Signature of the Enabling Strategist position

Figure 7.1 presents the Signature of the Enabling Strategist position. The illustration identifies each of the three Facets of Experience. Inside each Facet are the Influencing Dynamics. Each of these are represented depending on the degree participants' narratives represented these.

Figure 7.1. The Signature of the Enabling Strategist



The diagram above shows how the Signature of Enabling Strategist appeared as balanced across each of the Influencing Dynamics. This Signature does not represent any particular extremes, which was expected linked with the persona of this position' a persona that was well managed, for instance, within the charged

arena of course approval. However, within the above Signature, two Facets appear slightly more prominent than that of the others. These were Frame Perspectives and Patterns of Action. The next section, presents the Frame Perspective Facet as portrayed by the Enabling Strategist. In particular, it portrays how those who adopted this position appeared to manage the Influencing Dynamic of Boundaries to their advantage.

The Frame Perspectives of the Enabling Strategist

The three Facets of Experience used as organising principles represent different lenses through which individuals perceive the approval process. Dependent on the ways those involved chose to deal with demands created by the process, portrayed different kinds of thinking, acting and interacting with others, led to the adoption of a certain position within the process. As highlighted in previous chapters, Frame Perspectives reflected the perspective or worldview on understanding the process, by each of the positions. Two Influencing Dynamics, Boundaries and Temporality, as discussed next, constituted this Facet.

Boundaries: As a diversion alert

What was particularly apparent from the narratives of the Enabling Strategist, were the ways in which those associated with this position utilised and managed the Boundaries. Within the interpretative framework, Boundaries are the Influencing Dynamic, which challenged participants' understanding and thinking of the approval process. Differences in the ways participants managed these Influences represented the various positional identities identified in this study. This position, as the name implies, focused strategic-ness both of themselves and by others. Consequently, they generally sought to work through and around boundaries. Enabling Strategists understood their encounter with the Dynamics of Boundaries in approval, as an alert for alternative ways of thinking; limits that, commonly, were externally imposed, but could also be internally set by individuals; temporary structures that were either consumed, or assimilated into ways of thinking about course approval in order for the event and preparations leading to it, to become manageable.

Therefore, who set boundaries and how was significant to those who adopted the Enabling Strategist position. This knowledge provided an alert for other pathways or diversions in thinking about the approval process. A comment from Sylvia exemplified this stance:

> I think that we work within the system of authority. There needs to be a standardised system otherwise things simply can't run, it just turns into anarchy and therefore, although it [a course approval event] was only quite a short period after the one before, it's just something you can't change it, it's essential, it needs to happen and therefore you might as well capitalise on what's on offer and use it as an opportunity; well if there's no alternative, I always think you need to make the best of it (T1:3).

Sylvia's thinking reflected that she had not chosen to succumb to the process. Instead, being pragmatic when facing Boundaries featured as a strong trait of Enabling Strategists, Sylvia's narrative showed her acknowledgment of where the power lies but not a passive acceptance of it. She acknowledges authority, the power to act and make rules was necessary in order to have some control herself. Her viewpoint on the approval process is not one of imposition. Instead, Sylvia appeared to understand Boundaries as a signal to be sanguine, which is reflected in the phrases she uses, for example, connected with utilising what was 'on offer', optimising the process 'as an opportunity', the suggestion the process would involve generation of alternatives. Sylvia also suggested she was prepared to use a face-saving device, of being optimistic in the face of adversity as a tool.

Likewise, Janet showed her recognition of how the Influence of Boundaries operated at course level. Here, the ways that a course could be "known" officially is described through the identification of learning outcomes and indicative content:

> I know one of the course approval events here, the externals were asking us because they couldn't see it clearly in the indicative content when we were covering issues that were so basic that you wouldn't mention them...because there's a lot of stuff in indicative contact that you just have to assume...and I think the learning outcomes should be broad in that they can be achieved in a range of different ways but specific in that the aims of the module are achieved and that's, that's quite an art (T1:37)

As lead for her course, Janet portrayed her invidious situation. Whilst she might feel external members wanted to comprehend the minutiae, Janet recognised how she needed to work within the institutional thinking frame of learning outcomes and the indicative content specified. Here, she alters her perspective by referring to her 'art' of writing these in such a way that they did not limit alternative paths for learning, but did fulfil the needs of the sponsoring university and evaluative agencies needing to identify them.

Another way that the perspective of boundaries was significant to those in this position was how they became engaged in leading and managing preparations. Here there was a sense that staff set up barriers for themselves in sharing their expertise, due to dealing with the differences between university life and from working in practice. Janet shared a recollection of her transition:

> I think my immediate reaction was I couldn't believe how much freedom you had, and then there was the issue of finding out what the structures were and which things you didn't have freedom with which I found quite reassuring (T1:5)

As a manager-academic, Janet went on to explain how, within the confines of the approval process, this boundlessness was a troublesome issue. She believed some staff found the readjustment in moving from practice to university work challenging. Within approval preparations, staff exemplified this difficulty through not completing tasks. Janet's understanding was not that staff was intending to be disruptive but their inaction was partly down to changes in organisational cultures:

> I think the thing that I found most difficult in the transition was once the team got bigger and there were more members of staff and they were all contributing to the course, was coming to terms with how people dealt with their own autonomy, because the NHS had very rigid expectations of people. Working with academics, they don't conform, they do their own thing and it's like herding cats that was quite challenging, as it always will be [Laughs] (T1:6).

Janet's comment provides a comparative description of the potentially conflicting cultures, between working as an AHP academic in HE and the employers of graduates, for example, the NHS as recipients. Janet's laughter at the end

demonstrated the discomfort of her own situation by having to orchestrate and reconcile the two.

Finally, one of the most prominent characteristics that Enabling Strategists chose to understand boundaries was through choosing to assimilate them into their current thinking to work with or around them. Sylvia typified this stance:

> I know I do bang on a bit about the rules and regulations and the authority bit, but basically you have to learn the system, you have to learn what's required, and you have to make what you want to do fit the process of review and the system in terms of the boxes et cetera that you've got to fill. It's not hard (T2:29).

Sylvia's approach of dissipating the level of complexity, by making it appear piecemeal, was possibly a way of displacing the potential power the system had over her.

Another example of an Enabling Strategist accommodating the demands of the process is reflected by Janet's explanation of the Regulator's requirements:

> I have found the HPC bit, there are some bits which are frustrating because you think this is done because it has to be done with everybody and what's the point of it, but that's the same with any generic documentation I suppose. But I think, yeah I've found it... at least you know where you are. And I think sometimes you don't know where you are with other things (T1:28).

Janet's frustration with the uniformity of the process is evident. Yet, her comment also inferred that a compromise was to be found in the certainty created by the procedural nature of approval. She put this in contrast to dealing with 'other things', for instance, the uncertainty of educational futures and professional practice. Perhaps the process of approval partially reaffirmed her purpose. In fact, this was possibly the case, having started our conversation by describing herself as a 'black and white person' (T1:6) who depicted her day as:

> Its lots of bitty things I love it when I teach because that's the only time I feel I've accomplished anything. So that's where these major documents like course documents and things come in, you start putting your heart and soul in them, because well I've got something that I can prove myself and

> achieve something. Whereas most of the time you're doing a job well if the boat isn't rocking (T1:10).

Janet uses the idiom of 'heart and soul', which suggested an affinity between the course documentation and her own identity and capabilities as an academic. Interestingly, she suggested that her identity might be preserved through not going over the boundaries considered safe, by "rocking the boat". The identification of exceptions seems to be a major method of discovering if course teams had exceeded the tolerances set by evaluation agencies; and Enabling Strategists, due to knowledge gained from their outsider roles, knew more than most what these limits were and how they needed to be understood.

In sum, Boundaries provided those who adopted the position of Enabling Strategist with information. Information as to where potential resistance lay, for instance, within staff or the approval system itself. Armed with this information Enabling Strategists appeared to assess whether Boundaries could be worked through using their control of the situation or else, worked around or accommodated using their influence. This assessment also appeared to include an understanding of a relationship between time and space. In other words, to make a connection between the space(s) they themselves and their course team occupied, and the consequences over time of holding a perspective that did not synergise with the prevailing requirements of these spaces.

Temporality: The long view

Overall, Enabling Strategists did not refer consistently to the passing time as being an issue. In addition, the lifespan of an Enabling Strategist was long; having occupied the approval space on several occasions, the narratives of those associated with this position were littered with references to the longevity of their experience. For instance, Sylvia referred to remembering what systems had come before, 'Because I'm very old, I can remember the systems that were there' (T2:1). As a consequence, those who adopted this position appeared to orientate themselves differently to other positional identities in relation to the Influencing

Dynamic of Temporality. As previously presented in Chapter Six, Professional Guardians seemed to be busy as "Multi-taskers". This identity involved following the directives given to them, for instance, from practice settings and the university itself. Consequently, this position did not demonstrate any proactivity, whereas, the Governance Trustee, portrayed in Chapter Five, as "Time Guards", held only one approach towards temporality linked to co-ordinating activities to fit with the milestones specified by the approval process.

In contrast, Enabling Strategists appeared to take charge of time and appeared to adopt "the long view", which enabled them to control time as a resource, as well as use it constructively in relation to activities necessary to the process. Those adopting this position appeared to contest the availability of time once the course approval process had begun. Therefore, to maintain control over the process the Enabling Strategist typically projected a proactive stance, so as not to be overwhelmed. Such a standpoint would imply staff could be attuned to the pace of the system and likely requests within different spaces of the process. Sylvia explained in the description of course approval she shared with me:

> I think the analogy I draw really is that it's [the course approval process] like, the wave of the change is coming and you've got a choice really. You can let it wash over you and come up spluttering the other side, or you can surf on it and use it as a mechanism to take you forwards. And I always find curriculum development really quite exciting cause it's like surfing. It's taking change forward fast, it's quite a difficult balancing act sometimes. But at the end of the day its better than being in the water with the wave coming over the top of you isn't it? So you have to take charge really (T2:7).

Sylvia was of the opinion that you should be prepared not to stand still, otherwise involvement in the process could become unwieldy. Alex expressed similar thoughts:

> I'm looking at it more from an outside perspective from the profession. I think that feels right because from there you can work forward and you know, from that base you can actually see how a course team, puts that together (T1:21).

In this instance, Alex showed that a different orientation on approval would allow a more considered view of what was proposed and, over time, this vision would be an advantage to the team. This comment indicated how the Enabling Strategist position understood temporality, not simply as a concept related to time, but also how time was integral to different orientations within the approval space. In other words, there appeared to be two particular understandings of Temporality by those who adopted this position. Firstly, there was link between completing activities related to the process in the correct space, at the correct time. Secondly, combined with their leadership role in the process and responsibilities to a profession the Enabling Strategist projected a future(s) view onto course proposals, such that they would be robust enough to maintain currency until they were next due for major review in five years time. Alex typically exemplified this latter understanding of Temporality:

> I feel I suppose I have sometimes got quite a different perspective because of the different types of curriculum that I have actually lived through. And I suppose from a personal basis I still feel inside, we should risk take in the type of curriculum we offer our students, because I do think we've still got to, not keep our eyes on here, tomorrow, but out there in the future, because of the diversity that I think you know, we could be quite clearly able to work within (T1:23).

In the above narrative, Alex identified the benefits of overseeing a course proposal in more than one dimension beyond the immediacy of the current time. Living through various iterations of curricula and systems of approval for Alex and Sylvia had been a formative experience, since knowledge gathered from being in different times and spaces informed their projective abilities. In other words, gaining experience in the past had led to understanding how, in different circumstances, others organised themselves. This knowledge provided the Enabling Strategist with a bank of alternative approaches for use, should they find themselves in similar spaces.

The opportunity of reorientation not only facilitated different understandings on curriculum futures, but also initiated the re-acquaintance of staff with their (other) self(ves), relegated due to changes in location and position. Here, Alex and also

elsewhere Janet in showing her feelings of isolation in being a manager-academic, shared a sense of ambiguity between the "face" of the determined, assured Enabling Strategist; and, perhaps, another part of themselves their strong allegiance to being part of a profession specific team, as a Professional Guardian. What is interesting in Alex's comment is how she identifies the risk averse nature surrounding curriculum review that formed part of the approval process; managing risk and creating certainty would be consistent with the position of Enabling Strategist. The ambiguity of the spaces they occupied alongside matching this with the time of approval presented conflict. For example, Alex talked about 'trying to be visionary in terms of what is going ahead' (T2:25), yet, referred to closing 'the door' until you knew you were in a safe position. This action also may insinuate a coping strategy, by distancing oneself. Similarly, Janet shared her strategy when sharing a description of what the approval process meant to her. She gave me the peppermint tea bag in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2 Janet's peppermint tea bag

> Peppermint tea bag. It's because in this whole process [course approval] you are often very isolated, and you can just sit down and chill and have it and then go off again because it's not, I've not found it a thing that was easy to discuss, partly because everybody was doing it differently. So if you did it differently you think 'Oh not quite'. So you were much better to go and shut your door and have a cup of tea than ever you are to say to someone 'How have you done this?' and sink or swim (Janet T2:44).

Janet suggested by temporarily removing herself from the active arena, to sit and have a cup of tea, slowed time down and provided space to review what was going

on, linked to her own terms of reference. She shared, here, how she had past experience of listening to others about their progress in approval preparations and that this was destabilising. Such exposure placed her in an unwanted, vulnerable position that did not accord with that of being an Enabling Strategist.

In sum, those participants who appeared to adopt the Enabling Strategist identity demonstrated from their narratives the flow of time occurred in more than one dimension, it was retrospective, prospective as well as linked to a single moment. This appreciation underpinned their ability to orientate themselves within the current arena of course approval, deal with the requirements of the system and consider the implications of long-term proposals. Consequently, unlike any of the other positions in this study, Enabling Strategists attuned time and space to deal with the requirements of the approval system, alongside projective "long-view" capacities. The next section explores the Facet of Experience connected with Patterns of Action, specifically, how Enabling Strategists' enacted their knowledge whilst dealing with the Influencing Dynamics on their action, within the approval arena.

Patterns of Action of the Enabling Strategist

This section will explore the different Influencing Dynamics, which form part of the Facet of Experience, Patterns of Action. Emerging from the data, this Facet, which acted as an organising principle, represents ways the four positional identities understood action. Three Influencing Dynamics form Patterns of Action: Routines, Navigation and Adaptation. The way in which participants dealt with the demands of the approval process reflected an adopted position in the process.

Routines were the enactment of the Frame Perspectives Facet of Experience in-action, specifically the Influencing Dynamic of Boundaries. The effect of Routines within course approval was to solicit conformity of action. Each of the positional identities dealt with this differently. For example, Boundary Brokers "Learned the rules of the game" and used this intelligence and their experience to cross any

borders in the process. In contrast, Governance Trustees were "Custodians of the System" and did not resist the Influence of rules but, instead, upheld them.

Navigation represented the Influencing Dynamic that led to different ways in which participants moved around the different spaces of approval.

Adaptation demonstrated the means to adjust current ways of acting in the process and the capacity to cope with different demands course approval placed on those involved.

Routines: An unavoidable evil

The actions that the Influence of Routines exemplified emerged from an understanding of Boundaries. For the Enabling Strategist, connected to the Frame Perspective of this position, their knowledge of Boundaries acted as devices that provided an alert for action. In the case of Routines, this Influencing Dynamic exemplified by the specifications of evaluative agencies, such as the Regulator or PB, the different ways in which participants chose to cope with this Influence based on their narratives linked to different positional identities. For the Enabling Strategist, Routines, though demanding conformity of action, provided them with terms of reference for approval. Such explicit markers were important for the Enabling Strategist, since they supported and orientated action in order to attain the goal of approval for their course. All of those who adopted the Enabling Strategist position recognised that Routines were an unavoidable evil. Their narratives supported this stance, for several reasons.

Firstly, Routines, such as the Standards of Education and Training set by the HPC (HPC, 2009) to which Universities seeking approval of their pre-registration courses had to comply, were an improvement. The view presented by Enabling Strategists was that the old system of registration, including the methods used previously to validate AHP pre-registration courses, was outmoded and archaic. Alex explains the new remit:

> It is in fact about meeting all the standards for both a regulatory body who actually is looking there for the safety of the service user, the clients ultimately, and the professional body in terms of looking at the actual core discipline of [name of profession removed] that it actually meets those standards (T1:9).

However, there was also a sense, particularly from Alex, who inclined towards the Professional Guardian's position, that there was scepticism by what Alex termed 'their order' (T2:24). Due to the power wielded by these agencies and despite the standing of academics, such staff had to pay deference to approval panel members. Indeed, in the past, as far as some participants were concerned, members of approval panels, due to a variety of reasons, had the potential to abuse their power.

> I mean there's been a huge shift in the power balance, in the favour of the statutory body and away from the professional body. I think before the system tended to work well, but it depended a lot on who you got. The system really was not properly regulated I don't think (Sylvia T1:6).

Sylvia's narrative denotes her vigilance of the membership of approval panels; how those acting as representatives, including the Regulator, representatives from the PB, the University and Commissioners, could sway the outcome.

Secondly, despite the power of approval panels, participants' who adopted the Identity of Enabling Strategist appeared to welcome the Influence of Routines, as impartial specifications that could be evidenced. The new objectivity of the process was welcomed in comparison to the partiality demonstrated in the past. Janet explained how she had observed ways Visitors on an approval panel representing the HPC had reigned in the disparate behaviour of PB representatives. In addition, Sylvia who appeared the shrewdest of the three Enabling Strategists reflected:

> The things that it [the HPC] requires are not unreasonable, it has an extremely systematic way of going about it but that's really because it needs to in order to standardise something entirely across the whole of the Country. And we would be moaning like mad if the system were not transparent because it is completely transparent, you know what you're required to do, you know which boxes and they are literally boxes that you're required to fill in with HPC, and all you've got to do is fill them, and if you fill them you get a rubber stamp (T2:31).

Alongside Sylvia's no-nonsense approach to dealing with Routines by following the changes, pragmatism appeared motivated by something else. Enabling Strategists were astute in discerning the politics and with that where the power was in a given situation. This understanding allowed those who adopted this position to act and overcome any obstacles.

The third reason why Enabling Strategists dealt with Routines successfully and on their terms was perhaps, due to their previous backgrounds of working as senior clinicians, they themselves would have been used to the target orientated culture from other public services, such as the NHS. In the case of approval, "targets" were set by the HPC as Standards which compliance with not only achieved approval but also subsequently the employability of graduates for the NHS. Janet recognised this

> The HPC because the University will follow the HPC. if you are looking for employment it's an HPC registration you want (T1:29).

Janet's comment reflected the monopoly the Regulator possessed in both granting approval for pre-registration courses hosted by universities, whilst also being identified as the body that held the register of AHPs. Therefore, approval by this body alone was the imperative. Despite acknowledging the need to conform to these requirements as a necessity, some misgivings accompanied the effects of Routines. In particular, Alex questioned the underlying approach and motives of the process. Alex portrayed the positional identity of Enabling Strategist and was also, due to loyalties' linked with upholding professional interests, on the cusp of Professional Guardian. This cusp position frequently signalled signposting views from a personal perspective and foregrounding the use of 'I'.

> I think what's interesting if you're looking for, you know, a personal perspective here as being me, as opposed to my role, I think what its [the approval process] done is I think got course teams thinking right well, you know, this is now it. This is what we've got to do, and so very much strait jacketing, I'm thinking you know, HPC strait jacketing here. I think the style of event has changed, you know, wholeheartedly because it is this, well we have to do this as a you know, we have to ensure that this is all, you know, mapped, mapped through (T1:11).

As a manager-academic, and probably one serving as representative on various evaluative agencies, to give such a view in this capacity would have been untenable with what it meant to be an Enabling Strategist. Nevertheless, this narrative inconsistency provides an insight into how the change in the approval process was perceived and how standardised the process had become. The next section presents how those who linked to this positional identity found their way around this challenge.

Navigation: Resourceful pilot

Equally, one of the strongest attributes of the Enabling Strategist was their capacity to deal with the Influencing Dynamic of Navigation in the process. Navigation was linked to the capacities and resources each of the positions held for moving around the approval space. This section examines how the capacity to manage Navigation within the process demonstrated the Enabling Strategist's resourcefulness.

The narratives of Sylvia, Alex and Janet alone demonstrated that the many different fora they were part of, and significant experience of the approval process both in and outside of their own university, led them to adopt a subsequent resourceful stance enabling them to deal with demands of the process. For instance, it is clear that Sylvia was attentive towards the particular approaches of evaluative agencies in which she worked as a representative:

> And so QAA has a separate language. HPC has a set language, the University has a set language and there's quite a lot of overlap between the different things but in that you know, there are phrases that you need to use... (T2:30)

Such exposure to different spaces helped Sylvia to realise how important the use of different language was, and what terms were best. Sylvia went on to share that the main action any of the evaluative agencies wanted was to see their own rhetoric, or that of the government, reflected back to them within course documents. This, in some respects, raises a concern about how narcissistic the approval process might be. Dependent on how each positional identity dealt with the Influencing Dynamics that constituted the Facets of Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action and

Interactions could influence the degree of absolute power Evaluative Agencies could wield in the process. Perhaps, also, the presence of only certain positional identities within the process may determine not only the outcome, but also characteristics of courses approved by it. This issue is addressed and discussed later in Chapter Nine.

The position of Enabling Strategist exemplified strong leadership and responsibility for the outcome of approval. For instance, Alex felt that, being outward facing in the role of leader of a professional course, gave her responsibility to use power and control over course team members to steer them away from ideas that would not meet the requirements of the various evaluative agencies:

> I think what I do bring of course into the department is that if I feel that the team is going in a direction in which is going to put us in a difficult position, for a course review I'd say 'Look from my external experience.....et cetera I really have to stop this theory because actually you know I don't think that we would get this past'. Cause what you don't want to do is get down that end of the road and find that you're in a position that the HPC say 'We're not gonna approve you' (T2:16).

Whilst Alex seemed prepared to allow team members to explore different directions, exposure to other events, as a reviewer, provided an advantage in ensuring that any course development came within certain parameters. This situation highlighted a challenge in the role of Enabling Strategist; in facilitating the course team to develop and review curriculum and the course connected with futures of their profession, whilst also having to assimilate the statutory standpoint from outside of it. Such scenarios led to those adopting this position portraying a sense of brokerage in reconciling and moving between the two.

Sylvia felt that success at approval came because of what she termed 'leadership engagement', though, in practice, she described methods of management linked to the use of power and control, which ensured everyone performed to their optimum, the event was well organised and disruption minimal. Sylvia described this scenario as achieving a sense of "smoothness". This mindset of determined endurance identified with the Enabling Strategist, and suggested that those who adopted this

position would remain objective and unemotional when facing difficulties. Sylvia utilised two particular approaches to support this approach. Firstly, Sylvia identified the importance of avoiding conflict by using her power amongst staff, 'I mean I personally have a very, very strong dislike of any form of conflict. So one of the reasons I work hard at managing things well, is to avoid conflicts' (Sylvia T1:12). Secondly, Sylvia explained that avoiding conflict ensured that those involved, knew what the 'ground rules' were, in this instance she used forms of control to ensure this happened.

> I think it (dealing with autonomy) partly relates to the discussion that we've just had in that once people know what the ground rules are then they have the capability to be able to decide, and the expertise to decide exactly what they would like to put in their section of the curriculum. So there is a very substantial amount of discretions given to academics. So once you know that people will abide by the rules when the rules are set, and the rules aren't hard really it's just so much knowledge so many hours, so many assessments and fairly simple rules T2:3).

Sylvia's approach to involvement of staff in preparations for approval necessitated them being positioned in certain ways to avoid any conflict. Whilst Sylvia still believed in providing staff some scope to utilise their expertise it appeared to be on her terms. For instance, she used her position power to reinforce what counted as areas for discussion. There was a disconcerting sub-text to the positional identity of Enabling Strategist as an expectation was of staff to follow rules, since it was not difficult and something they themselves acquiesced to when the need arose. Associated with the locus of control of this position Enabling Strategists also used another approach to deal with the Dynamic of Navigation within the process, and that was by facilitating staff to come forward themselves with ideas.

Alex expressed this alternative approach to Navigation as she explained the need to stand back and guide the team through the requirements of the evaluative agencies. Alex argued 'how can you argue a rationale in front of a panel, if you're not committed to what you've done, to what you've developed' (T2:13). This comment suggested Alex expected staff to be steadfast when facing evaluation of their proposals by the approval panel. By nurturing, Alex insinuated this approach

to Navigation would afford the course team resourcefulness and subsequent strategies to survive change and uncertainty. Overall, Enabling Strategists, due to their navigational wherewithal, acted in the role of resourceful pilot, in order to steer the course team through the challenging circumstances of approval preparations and events. Indeed, having managed the influence of Routines and optimised the benefits of Navigation around the approval space, the final part of this section addresses the capacity of those associated with this position to deal with the Influence of Adaptation.

Adaptation: Reformation not transformation

Adaptation was the means a positional identity used to adjust their current ways of acting in the process in order to deal with different demands placed on them by the process. Unlike the Boundary Broker position, presented in Chapter Eight, the Enabling Strategist lacked the same creative abilities to adapt. Instead, participants who adopted this position compensated though using their power to influence change or action in others. An Enabling Strategist approached adaptation by reforming or adjusting current ways of doing things, rather than wholesale transformation of curriculum and course structures. In this way, the process could be managed and risks minimised.

A primary way Enabling Strategist's dealt with the Dynamic of Adaptation was through monitoring the environment and noticing the need for change. Without possessing awareness of the environment changing, any process of adjustment could not begin. Consequently, through monitoring trends and new developments alongside making comparisons with current and future circumstances the Enabling Strategist position remained vigilant towards adaptation being required.

An example came from Janet, who explained that one of the biggest changes facing AHP programmes, were the effects that changes in commissioning student places would have. Whereas, in the past, a wider agenda drove the NHS, the mandate for an AHP course and the profession specific profile had changed:

> I can see how commissioned courses would meet the needs of a local population and be approved but might not meet the need of the nation or someone who's trained in that course might not find it easy to work somewhere else in the Country. I think that is potentially a problem (Janet T1:29).

Janet's prospective thinking was typical of an Enabling Strategist. She highlighted how, without the evidence of a clear business plan supporting a proposal for (re)approval, the evaluative agencies were unlikely to condone these circumstances. Therefore, in order to gain the contract for places, following the Commissioners specification was vital. Here, it is clear how Janet's exposure outside of her own institution has allowed her to gain valuable insights 'I've been to another approval event where the course was totally driven by commissioners' (T1:32). With this form of intelligence, common to all Enabling Strategists, those who adopted this position were able to be responsive to the agendas of other stakeholders in order to defend their own perspective. This call for watchfulness linked the survival of professional profiles as much as courses themselves.

Though the Enabling Strategist was politically astute to the demands of various stakeholders, they were not totally constrained to the point that they did not appreciate the need to support course developments. However, any such innovations needed to be introduced carefully so as not to compromise requirements. Therefore, there was clever management of adaptations or developments to courses.

Analysis of the data revealed that Alex, Sylvia and Janet found ways to work around the requirements in order to enable change. Alex described her stance:

> So I think you know, the HEI basic structure um…you signed up to it because you actually are part of that institution. That doesn't stop a team trying to look at innovative ways of trying to look at how what has to be put into the curriculum is put in (T1:18).

Though room for adjustment was also important to Sylvia, interestingly this also called for some management of her other selves. Similar to other Enabling Strategists her narrative, in places, provided glimpses into other identities,

connected to being part of a team and profession specific subject interests. Interestingly Sylvia's narrative pointed towards how the process of review sometimes required her to differentiate between the role of manager and that of academic. For example, at one stage she was concerned that any new development 'was strategic sized but then beyond that I would purposefully step right back from the planning' (T2:26). Alternatively, she used 'my academic hat if there's planning going on and it's sticking at some point'. In essence, she sometimes used another identity, which allowed her to enable the team to progress ideas. However, data also indicated how Sylvia never lost sight of the commanding and measured attitude typical of the Enabling Strategist to ensure ideas would be "approvable" by the evaluative agencies. She explained one such approach:

> But overall the complete shape of the course and how it was going to be packaged was decided by us [the management team] then people went and did all of their individual sections, which they did very well. But I think that process of having a mentor, having a structure is really important and that's what a novice team needs (T2:36).

In common with other Enabling Strategists Sylvia acknowledged her primary responsibility within the organisation to deliver a successful result, however, she recognised the need to be supportive of others ideas. She epitomised the capabilities of being an 'Enabler' through mentorship of staff whilst, in addition, not losing sight of the necessity to be a 'strategic' organisational player.

Not all of those connected to this position found that such action was without challenge. Janet was still reasonably new as a manager academic. Though she described her role as 'a responsibility that I relish' (T1:19) part of the characteristics of this position was a responsibility, which involved undertaking tasks that others might not, such as those practices in approval directed towards meeting the requirements of evaluative agencies. Janet illustrated these circumstances:

> I think there's that need for pragmatism. And sometimes that gets lost. I think you do have to see ultimately the final course document as a job that someone has to do, and take responsibility for, and lots of people will be happy (T1:42).

Adaptation, for Janet, involved presenting herself in a certain way in order to achieve the target of approval. Yet, there was also a sense leadership was not easy and maintaining relationships was important. Sustaining relationships was lifeblood to this position since the Enabling Strategist saw course approval as being realised through their harnessing of the collective expertise of staff who worked with them. Alex, Sylvia and Janet relied on different interactions with others to provide expert knowledge and intelligence; such interactions supported their strategic capacities. The capacity of this position for Interactions with others is presented next.

Interactions of the Enabling Strategist

The Facet of Experience connected to Interactions reflected the ways those connected to this position demonstrated different forms of interaction with others in the approval arena. The remainder of this section examines how Enabling Strategists perceived the two Influencing Dynamics connected to Interactions: Networks and Translation, each of these are presented in order.

Networks: For influence

Narratives from those who adopted the Enabling Strategist position revealed that Networks had significance for them in two ways. Firstly, networks and the influence that these created on the approval process were changing. Consequently, new relations needed to be initiated, and others maintained, in order for the course to retain currency with practice areas they sought to supply. Secondly, contacts and exposure to other groups of people could be used advantageously in the process. As a result, such was the importance of Networks, they were always something that Enabling Strategist were on the go with since they provided ways to influence the approval process.

Analysis of the narratives indicated all of the participants associated with the Enabling Strategist position understood the importance of accessibility to networks. The act of networking was as an essential aspect that supported a successful approval process. Therefore, the Enabling Strategist was typified as possessing vast

networks across HE, alongside substantive professional contacts at a national level. This familiarisation with stakeholders was helpful. Though it seemed the historical nature of these stakeholders, made up of contacts within a profession, was changing and this presented challenges, Alex shared her perception:

> I think that in a way there is a philosophical change from the CPSM [Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine, predecessor to the HPC) who were clearly AHPs, you know a group together. You felt as though there were more clusters as opposed to 'here's our umbrella organisation the HPC and these are 12 and 13 disciplines coming on stream' (T1:16).

Alex insinuated this re-organisation had changed from being a community that maintained itself by lateral communication to more of a mechanistic structure, promoting top down communication with strict alignment to the Regulatory Body and all the professions being treated generically. The latter arrangement was more officious, bureaucratic and, therefore, less easy to access and influence.

Apart from changes to the regulatory structure, Enabling Strategists also noted how the numerous stakeholders involved was changing and becoming almost generic, because stakeholder representation was so diverse. As a result, course approval events had become a crowded place. This effect, combined with regulatory changes, altered what was once the broad power base of the PB.

> I think the professional influence has been taken down to an extent that's not helpful, there is experience and expertise there, but it isn't utilised (Sylvia T1:17).

Sylvia's observation indicated that she valued, and probably relied on, the support of her PB at approval events. Yet, not only had their power within events now become, at best, shared amongst other stakeholders, but there was also a sense that instrumental action had been taken to place this expertise out of reach for a reason, in order to erase or revise old working practices and affable contacts that could be optimised with the approval process. Such significant changes created a significant resource gap for leads of pre-registration courses. The traditional ways of professional groups being responsible for monitoring their own standards and supporting their own within validation events was over.

The next area of significance for Enabling Strategists was in utilising new and existing networks advantageously to support their project of gaining approval of their course. Janet appeared to maximise on the Influence of Networks. She had established these contacts through attending approval events outside of her institution. This exposure permitted insight into the pool of reviewers and external panel members fielded by her profession.

> The minute I knew who are externals were going to be, I knew there was going to be a challenge. Not because I didn't rate them but because of what I knew of their interests (T1:23).

The nature of this position inclined Janet towards using this external exposure to her advantage. From this point the Enabling Strategist was equipped to develop approval arena intelligence. This included a plan, not just based on meeting the immediate challenge of evidencing that the Regulator's standards, but also possibilities where panel members may place particular emphasis. A further way of being proactive in utilising the Dynamic Influence of Networks, characterised by Enabling Strategists, was through purposefully fostering collegial relationships, as Sylvia explains:

> I knew the HPC Reviewer, so I knew one. I didn't know the other and I knew very well the [professional body name] Reviewer and had reviewed with her at a previous review I was at; I was an HPC Reviewer then and she was a [name of professional body] Reviewer; I knew she was very sound and also I used to be her external examiner, so it wasn't really because I used to be an external examiner we'll get an easy time, that's not what I'm saying at all, it was, because we're colleagues who have mutual respect for one another. She's a person whose opinion I value. Then I felt quite confident, so I didn't have any anxieties before we went in (T1:11).

Those who adopted this position preferred to know what they were dealing with. Sylvia typified this stance through using power networks to advantage. By utilising such contacts this diluted or changed the power dynamic between the approval panel and course team members.

Clearly, whilst utilising the Influence of Networks was important to Enabling Strategists, participants linked to this position assumed some sort of responsibility

towards assuring against the threat of their extinction. Alex particularly believed that this responsibility should extend to all academics:

> I think we've all got the responsibility as academics to try and look at the external networks. Try and look at ways of influencing that. It's all academics responsibility to have external networks where you know this flagging up of what [professional title] have to offer and you know the sort of the scope of the practice is so important. Whether that's meetings with the SHA, or whether that's managers meetings or various partners' meetings (T2:31).

Alex appeared committed to the value of networks not just as a means to influence those involved but directly to influencing the approval agenda itself. She was also enthusiastic about galvanizing academics and clinicians to work in closer partnership together. Taking this approach, Alex seemed to suggest this would better enable those involved, who worked with those impacted by the outcome of the process, service users and future practitioners, to have a stake in determining the future of AHP professions. Taking ownership for sustaining networks, and building mutuality within them was also determined by the final Influencing Dynamic within the Interactions Facet: Translation.

Translation: Ciphers of the system

Others perceived Enabling Strategists as experienced translators and, as such, acted as ciphers in the system. Specifically, the Enabling Strategist was able to consistently decode or encode the language of policy documents, either to embed these in action at local level or to make a response on behalf of their specialist area. However, for those who had adopted the Enabling Strategist position, translation meant more than making sense of strategy. In order to secure a favourable outcome, it also involved the interpretation of circumstances both in, and surrounding the approval journey.

Denoting the 'language' in use featured strongly in narratives of the Enabling Strategist position. Sylvia's narrative typified the importance of detecting and using preferred words:

> Unless you've got an adviser that says to you these are the things you need to do for HPC, and HPC will judge you like this, and you'll have a much easier time if you write this information in this particular way. If somebody tells you that, that's fine, but if you have to kind of gradually find it out, or even not find it out and then end up with a massive list of conditions from HPC! (T1:14)

Sylvia suggests that forms of dialogue could be a barrier if one did not know the rules. There was a sense, from her, that only those who were part of the cabal and prepared to share the rules of the game would be successful. This stance seemed to contradict what Sylvia had previously stated about the transparency of the system. Instead, it served to emphasise the micro-political environment surrounding the process.

Enabling Strategists understood the existence of micro-politics and, so, understood gaming. Gaming behaviour is associated with target orientated systems in which, if those involved learn the control mechanisms, participants will be tempted to find ways of short-circuiting the system, in order for their performance to appear favourable. The following reflection from Janet provides a view of this stance:

> Because I think it really comes down to language and how because we all want the same thing, it's how we sell it and how we talk about it that is the difference. So, that is quite a tension. Well I suppose for some people you would have to think of module descriptors and what is in a module descriptor name is always an interesting thing - but you would have to say 'Ah well if we teach evidence based practice, you would say well that's research methods'. So sometimes you use the more traditional terminology with them (T1:27).

Janet's narrative also highlighted her understanding of language as forming part of a transaction in which different kinds of language have currency within a particular discipline. Once understood this insight allowed those with the power, for example, Enabling Strategists to choose alternatives, which befit the intended audience. Alex also understood the value of using appropriate terms, though, unlike Janet and Sylvia, Alex showed cynicism about it.

Alex doubted that when a course was considered for approval, what went on during the panel meetings provided a true insight into how the curriculum 'would flow for

student participants' (T1:12). Instead, she felt matters had become very procedural because of what was permitted within the discussions that took place in approval events. She recalled the last approval event when, for her, there was a glimpse of collegial discussion connected with moving the professional curriculum forward. However, they shut down this exchange in favour of sticking to the agenda. Especially for Alex, this threatened the whole meaning of what approval signified:

> To me, you know, the mapping has just gone far too far. How many times can you map? And what does that really say to you? What you actually want to have a feel of is what that experience is going to be like, what's the quality of the experience, knowledge and understanding that students are going to gain, you know? Instead, it's done and dusted and mapped! (T1:23)

Alex, in her narrative, indicated that something so complex could be debased and become habitualised, 'done and dusted' like a domestic task. This scenario was the antithesis of discerning the quality of education offered by a pre-registration course seeking approval. Alex's translation of this change in circumstances seemed to act more as motivator to her, such that course team would have this insight and consequently not feel bounded by the language, or the officious circumstances in which approval took place.

Part of the change in the environment of approval was alluded to previously by Janet, when she referred to 'a tension' (T1:27) in the process of presenting the course. For her this was as a result of problems in dealing with the Influence of Translations due to the variety of stakeholders present in the event itself. Janet believed this could threaten securing consistency of understanding between those present:

> At another event I've been at it has become apparent that the Chair and the course team had a completely different understanding of what reflection means. So if you have things like reflection meaning very different things to different people within the panel then it all gets very messy. So that's an issue (T1:21).

Here, she recalled how she believed external members appointed by the University often held diverse understandings of the same term. Janet's concern was that

diversity in panel members added further complexity in the process of translation. Although panel members had to be independent, it was not uncommon to have individuals who were from a completely different background from the course being approved. For instance, academic staff from art and design being appointed to the approval panel for a health sciences degree. This not only influenced the collective mindset on what counted as knowledge, but also the potential cohesiveness by which panel members themselves worked together. Janet's perception was that without control over membership selection and briefing about the parameters for approval of a course involving professional statutory regulatory bodies, the process could be challenging. Sylvia's view was similar to Janet's concerning the need for structure:

> So giving a clear structure reassures people so that everybody knows the rules. If there's certain things you absolutely can't do, even though somebody would love to, if it's clear at the beginning that is just not negotiable, then that takes that off the table and you can work with what's left (T2:24).

Although, Sylvia identified how work could continue once the rules within the system were established. On the surface, this view suggests such interaction is straightforward, yet this narrative also revealed the challenging side of the Enabling Strategist. Securing a collective understanding was characteristic of this position. Therefore, the Enabling Strategist interpreted the presence of any conflict as an aggravation to the effective realisation of this collective understanding. So, Enabling Strategists became not only ciphers of the system but also ciphers for permissible contributions by staff. In sum given the association of this position with leadership roles, alongside the high value placed on navigation of private and publically known networks, they took various steps to manage the Influencing Dynamic of Relations, such that these would not adversely affect their journey of their course towards approval, or the position they occupied in it.

Summary

The positional identity of Enabling Strategist was the most pivotal identity within the process of approval. Due to the wealth of experience they possessed as academics, managers and clinicians together with the levels of externality they embraced, the Enabling Strategist had a comprehensive range of skills and knowledge to deal with the process. A course team led into approval by an Enabling Strategist would be in safe hands and, no doubt, approval achieved. However, a troublesomeness was attached to those who adopted the Enabling Strategist identity. The challenge was that their focus was chiefly motivated towards dealing with the structures put before them. Whilst those who adopted this identity handled these expediently, the concern was that such a stance could incline them towards managing the immediacy of events and a specification determined by others, rather than engaging in the risk of advancing the agenda themselves based on a long-term consideration of professional and educational futures. Part of this challenge lay with the accountabilities they held to the organisations in which they worked. As such, to transgress the set agenda of governance may result in compromising loyalty to the corporation. However, one positional identity emerging from this study that managed to do so was the Boundary Broker presented in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS (IV)

THE POSITIONAL IDENTITY OF THE BOUNDARY BROKER

Introduction

This chapter considered the positional identity of the Boundary Broker in course approval events. It has four sections. The first section presents the Signature of the position and portrays the unique way this position can be distinguished from others. The latter three sections follow a similar pattern to the preceding chapters utilising data from the study to show the position in practice. Each follows the organisation of the interpretative framework, presented in Chapter Four, through discussing in turn each of the Facets of Experience: Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action and Interactions.

The Signature of the Boundary Broker

The Signature of a position based on the interpretative framework, Facets of Experience, consisted of a narrative image which depicts the Aspects, or characteristics of the Position, and an illustration.

Aspects of the position: The Boundary Broker

Out of the twelve participants only two, Jac and Paula adopted the approach consistently. Jac and Paula held several characteristics in common with each other. Both were academics in AHP departments, each had national profiles and were astute about the demands surrounding the course approval process.

As long as Paula could remember, she had always undertaken work to support her PB. Initially she was the officer in a local group and progressed to working on regional committees. Now she was a national Council Member. Paula described herself as feeling the need to 'Bite the bullet and put myself up for open election, so I did that and I was elected. I've actually formerly put my money where my mouth is' (T1:4). She appeared very committed and presented a proactive 'can-do' attitude towards work, this was mirrored in her story about involvement in the approval process.

The arena of course approval was host to a variety of different stakeholders, all with their own specific agendas that needed to be negotiated. As previously highlighted, the power held by various evaluative agencies, particularly the Regulator, was considerable. However, Paula and Jac were typical of the Boundary Broker having themselves held multiple roles, one of these was as a Visitor or Accreditor. This experience provided useful intelligence about the metrics of what agencies required and the 'speak' they used, as Paula explained:

> One of the reasons I am involved in QAA and the HPC and the [PB] is, I know exactly what each of those; I know what the hot spots are. (T1: 25).

Paula's capacity to gauge the priorities, as she identifies 'the hot spots', in the above comment were an asset since, by being part of a course team, she was able share this knowledge with colleagues who had less exposure to external environments, particularly the political. Consequently, the realisation that membership of an approval panel cannot be predicted, influenced Paula to possess a vigilant stance. And, utilising a broad network of contacts was able to gain insight into the likely approach to be taken by those appointed.

Paula was, therefore, not only an academic but also a team member in her own department, who held a range of roles outside of her immediate area, to include being a Visitor or Accreditor for an evaluative agency. This position placed Paula on the boundary with lots of different communities, and consequently provided skills and knowledge to negotiate the demands of approval events to her own, and colleagues' advantage; she was, in effect, a Boundary Broker.

Jac's background prior to working in HE was as the Head of Department of a therapy service. She had always taken students on practice placement and got in talks to others about what her job entailed. Jac was also involved in undertaking some teaching at a local university. Like many other experienced therapists, she told me how her wish was not to follow the route of being a head of a larger department. So, the only way of progressing was to have done something different. As she put it, working in practice 'didn't challenge the grey cells' (Jac T1:2).

Having enjoyed previously working with students Jac decided that was the new direction for her. From the early days of working as a lecturer, Jac progressed her own standing by completing various post-graduate courses, from which several publications followed. Jac was an excellent teacher; she was innovative in her approach, always seeking new and different ways for students to become engaged in evidencing their practice. Such efforts endeared them to her. At the time of this study, Jac had amassed substantive experience working in several institutions. She was well known amongst AHP colleagues for her research profile both nationally and internationally. Despite her profile, she did not always regard herself well, describing herself as someone who could 'witter for England'.

As an academic, Jac was passionate about curriculum development. She had been involved within several iterations of various courses, and had sat as an external panel member on many approval events. Jac believed working towards the (re)approval of a course included space for re-visioning, of 'throwing all the balls up into the air to see where they land' (T2:3) and from this point discussion would start. In fact, unlike other colleagues, Jac did not appear to have anxieties about the process:

> I don't know whether my approach to it has changed but I suspect it has. I found them less scary because I've been through them before, as other people get totally chewed up about them and think they're totally scary, no they're not. But I also think there was, in the earlier ones there was a level of debate and exchange, and it wasn't critical, it was a very interesting way of exploring and challenging and developing ideas, and there was debate (T1:13).

This comment demonstrated Jac's capacity to take in the wider context of events and her insight into circumstances, which Jac felt were conducive for the (re)approval of a course. Also interesting is how Jac's narrative suggested she was open to critique and comfortable with questioning the boundaries of what was already known, including ways of doing things. Typical of the Boundary Broker identity, and similar to Paula, perhaps Jac's openness arose from having visited different academic communities outside of her own familiar areas. Clearly Jac's broad repertoire of abilities, particularly her inter-personal skills, allowed her to

interpret easily what was required in a given setting. This also meant that she was able to return to her own setting and lever situations, such as course approval events, negotiating within these using her acquired knowledge from elsewhere.

The outward facing aspects of this positional identity provided a high level of navigational ability. Consequently, the position of Boundary Broker understood course approval as less onerous than the other three positions. Instead Boundary Brokers preferred to view approval events as an attainable target. Paula reflected her current stance:

> I suppose it's because I'm less naive now and that I recognise that actually success is probably the most important thing, to successfully move through this to the target, to be externally seen as a good quality provision, whereas previously I probably think early on in my career there was the power differential that these people were the experts and I wasn't (T2:4).

From this narrative, Paula shared something akin to a transitional journey in how she saw approval. The suggestion above, of success at all costs, could place Paula at the cusp of the Enabling Strategist position. However, what separated her was a disinterest in having power over others, for instance, as a manager-academic. In fact, Paula viewed these roles as unattractive, being encumbered by bureaucracy.

Despite not holding aspirations to line manage staff, the Boundary Broker was astute at deciphering the political dynamics of situations. Their antenna for change in the immediate environment and across the sector overall was always active. In addition, the length of experience Boundary Brokers possessed meant that they were able to offer a substantive historical commentary alongside a viewpoint beyond that of their own profession.

> I do sometimes wonder whether anybody has actually got an overview of how things actually work, because you've got different strands. You've got whatever the university wants to do and you've got whatever HPC [Health Professions Council] wants to do but there should also be what the PB want, and I have a curious feeling sometimes possibly that gets missed off, or doesn't always negotiate into whatever it is that the HPC are setting up, because I suppose technically its HPC that are pushing the actual curricular and what goes into it (Jac T1:14).

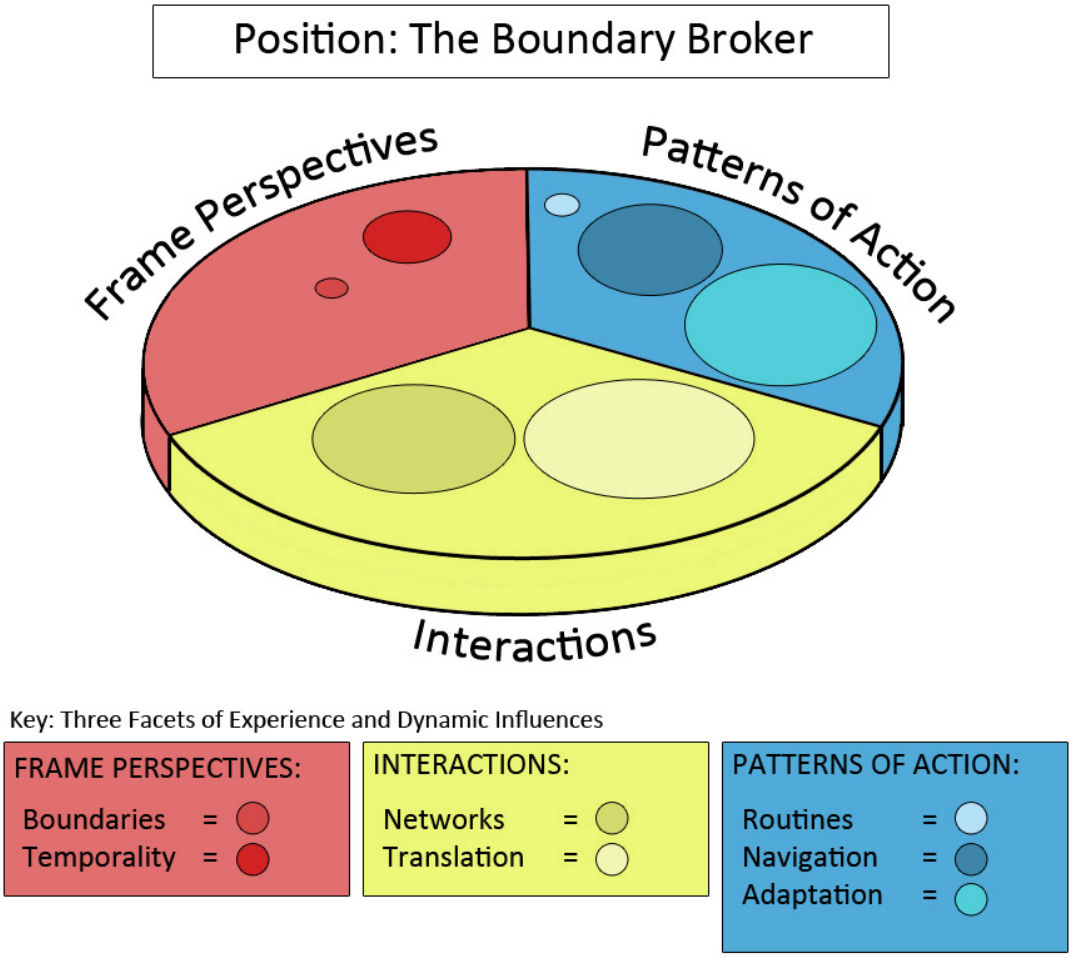
Whilst Jac, in the above, provides a useful descriptive account of the many stakeholders involved in approval events, she portrayed aspects of the Boundary Broker by not accepting these circumstances. Instead, she raised questions, and implied that the consequences of this scenario needed to be reconsidered.

In sum, aspects of the Boundary Broker position reflected those academics who achieved high status in their profession. Boundary Brokers relished working in various settings. Consequently, this could be viewed as a nomadic position. Despite sometimes being considered as on the periphery of everyday department life Boundary Brokers possessed a sophisticated ability for Translation and negotiation across different audiences. Consequently, they were an asset in approval events.

Signature of the Boundary Broker position

The Signature of the Boundary Broker is portrayed in Figure 8.1. It depicts each Facet of Experience, the connected Influencing Dynamics and represents the degree to which these were portrayed in the particular Signature of this position.

Figure 8.1. The Signature of the Boundary Broker



Within the above Signature, the most important Facets for the Boundary Broker are related to their abilities for confident action and autonomy to interact with those around them. Therefore, Adaptation, Navigation and Translation alongside Networks predominated. Boundary Brokers were least concerned by the passing of time, including their own place in the world. In addition, whilst they acknowledged the existence of boundaries their identity was not preoccupied by them since, for Boundary Brokers, such barriers were usually permeable ones. The next section begins by exploring the Facet connected with these two Influencing Dynamics, referred to as Frame Perspectives.

The Frame Perspectives of the Boundary Broker

Within this study course approval events are understood as temporary, co-constructed arenas in which participants, in varying ways, managed the influences around them. The experience of approval was understood to be organised around three Facets: Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action and Interactions. The first of these, considered here, Frame Perspectives represented the perspective or worldview of participants' related to the approval process. It included two Influencing Dynamics: Routines and Temporality discussed next.

Boundaries: Permeable borders

Boundaries were Influencing Dynamics that challenged the scope of participants' understanding or thinking about the process. Commonly within approval, this Dynamic imposed limitations on thinking. Though commenting on limits was a common feature within the narrative of the Boundary Broker position, these seemed to be presented to make issues clear, and make these borders permeable to them. Boundary Brokers handled Boundaries in the following three ways:

- Firstly, those in this position were proactive in understand and managing boundaries. In sum, how Boundaries were set by others, in what circumstances, alongside the effects these may have, particularly in relation to who held power within the situation.

- Secondly, in order to achieve the goal of course approval, boundaries were understood by Boundary Brokers not as limits, but as permeable boundaries or borders that could be pragmatically negotiated and crossed.

- Thirdly, for Boundary Brokers acknowledging Boundary limits within yourself and others in the process was pivotal.

These ways of dealing with this influence are discussed further here.

Boundary Brokers were proactive in recognising how individuals and agencies set boundaries.

> I don't know whether it is, but it feels like its HPC [the Health Professions Council], and that they, it's not the professional bodies, but the regulatory bodies, who are kind of controlling it and organising and working out their ways of doing it [course approval]. And …setting up constraints that actually then don't allow developments on from things (T1: 13).

The comment by Jac was typical of those who might adopt the Boundary Broker position. Being mindful of who held control within course approval events featured strongly as a factor within the Boundary Broker position. Paula conveyed how her PB used to be invited to approval events, which were a tri-partite approval event between the PB, the host university and registering body. However, changes in statute led to the dissolution of these arrangements. Consequently, HEIs realised AHP courses only needed the newly formed Regulator's approval, the HPC not the host of other organisations that had previously attended. Paula demonstrates an assessment of what she describes as a mounting tension, a 'ground swell of realisation across the country' and how she, with other members of her PB, was involved in lobbying Universities about the benefits of Profession specific involvement in the approval of courses.

The data also indicated for people in this position their worldview of Boundaries was that they were not understood as limits, but as borders that could be navigated across. One of the ways was by being practical about what needed to be done.

> I think they've [the Regulator and Professional Bodies] become more real, more realistic, and there are certainly discussions happening between the PB and HPC now, and they meet to discuss issues and they meet to look at ways forward. but I wouldn't say it was necessarily from the position of choice, I think it's a pragmatic position (Paula T1:12)

Paula's comment belies the Boundary Broker position since in their actions they were prepared to relegate their own opinions or 'choice' to achieve a commonly desired goal. Consequently, those who adopted this position were more likely to be pragmatic in order to overcome difficult situations. For instance, Jac recounted a validation event in which a course had not been granted approval. This was in the

early days when AHP courses had relocated into universities. The shift into HE had mainly been driven by the impetus for AHPs to become established as degree entry professions, with a recognised body of knowledge. However, this move meant that course teams were required to acquiesce to university structures:

> So there were overarching principles of the modular course, which were supposed to fit into, but there were always bits where we couldn't, so you know, you were setting up pre-requisites for modules and people saying 'well you can't have that as a prerequisite' and then saying 'but you have to have that as a prerequisite' or 'we have to have, if a student fails this so many times', so you know, then doing this balancing act but actually quite a useful backup of saying the PB says we have to (Jac T1:6).

As lead for a course team Jac's narrative, above, shows her experience of conceding to organisational requirements, in order for her course to be approved and accepted within the university system. However, yielding to the university led to thinking that was connected with getting something else instead. Consistent with the position of Boundary Broker, the use of levers, here demands from Jac's PB were used as negotiating tools to achieve compromise for all involved.

The final way those in the position of Boundary Broker chose to handle the Influencing Dynamic of Boundaries was by acknowledging their own boundaries and understanding those of others. Importantly, those adopting this position demonstrated that in understanding these they were able to effect change successfully, as Jac explains:

> Some [staff] I think were more reluctantly signed up than others, some people signed up more readily. I mean there were, you know, people who had been there for a million years, and people who had been there who taught me…some of them it was harder to move, others it wasn't, and sometimes it was other people, but…I suppose there was always a tension of you know, well where…what are we going to miss out? We've only got this amount of time, what are we going to be able to put into it? So I think there were always those tensions, which are the tensions that are still going on now, it hasn't changed (T1:8).

Jac's attitude to moving forward with a project was through understanding where those involved in the process were. Here, she identified pivotal issues related to commitment and anxieties from colleagues about what they may stand to lose from

the curriculum due to changes in course structure. Such a reflection, in taking into account the positions of others as well as herself, meant these could be tackled practically. Another example of the importance in appreciating how others comprehended the influence of Boundaries was related to the approval itself.

> So I'm not hugely different. I'm more so in the HPC because I have to be in that regulatory role, um, but no, I wouldn't say, I would hope that anybody who, who I was visiting would feel that, um, I suppose that everybody hopes they think it's a fair event but I don't think that, I don't think, I don't want people to view me as um oh, it's [name removed] coming, we need to be really careful (Paula T2:6).

This comments show Paula's mindfulness of how, during an approval visit, staff may perceive the role of Visitors working on behalf of the Regulator. She demonstrated insight that their persona may be different and subsequently misinterpreted. Such an effect would run counter to the goals of Boundary Brokers' of enabling an inclusive, partnership approach for all concerned. Paula's perception, as she explained to me, led to the adoption of an alternative approach, by making a statement about her role when she represented an evaluative agency as a panel member. Using this approach misunderstanding by staff might be avoided.

Finally, those in this position were likely to have greater self-awareness in knowing their own boundaries. Both Jac and Paula demonstrated this characteristic. Paula referred to this as a process of 'checking oneself'. She interpreted this within the context of approval events, 'that as an individual that you're not taking a particular, that you're not becoming unchecked. Because otherwise you're doing a disservice all round really' (T2:5). Paula's narrative suggested in becoming 'unchecked' individual stances may become uncontrolled and this would deter a collective purpose. She went onto explain that checking herself involved being 'a listening person' and that the stance to be taken was that 'you are amongst peers and you're listening to all the arguments and validating your own view'. Attention to the action of peers has already been identified as an indicator of this position. Interestingly though this might also be gained through reflexivity about one's own action, for example, Jac gained an insight into the boundaries of others when being

confronted by her own behaviour. She explained how this had been highlighted through a significant issue:

> I suppose the interesting thing was, because I was at [name removed] I was part of the 'but we've always done it like that', even though, you know, going 'okay yeah we'll change it', and here, when I came here, I had no vested interests in anything, and so I could look at the modules going on and going 'but why does it have to be like that?'. And so trying to persuade people that things could be re-packaged differently (T1:12)

Jac's comment suggests through gaining insight into her own situation in the past, when feeling threatened by change, she was in a better position to help others move forward and let go of practices that would no longer equip students for practice. Evidently, persuasion was another tool Boundary Brokers might also rely on. To be able to broker a situation or a boundary you first had to be able to view the whole scene. This kind of 'helicopter quality', which Boundary Brokers possessed involved understanding time, and how time related to the spaces those involved in approval inhabited and planned for in the future.

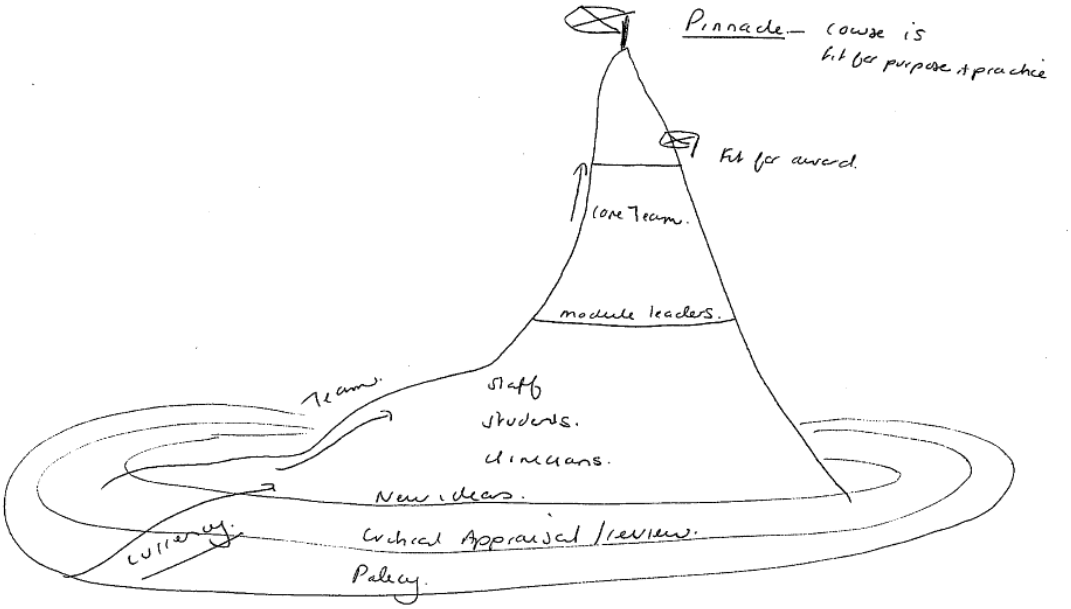
Temporality: An informing gestalt

Concerns connected with time by those who adopted the Boundary Broker position were minimal. Participants' referred to time yet, unlike the Governance Trustee for whom managing time was a central factor, they had not become preoccupied by it. Instead, Temporality provided an influence, similar to that of a gestalt, in affording an insight into how all the aspects in the time available constituted the process.

Primarily, both Jac and Paula made a number of references about the need to be forward looking in their thinking to be able to view the space ahead. For instance, Jac was concerned by the number of stakeholders, their individual agendas and whether anyone had an overview of the process. An important aspect of the Boundary Broker position was capacity to see what was ahead, to speculate on how all the pieces, or contributors to approval might fit together. In this way, difficulties could be anticipated and plans for overcoming barriers through negotiation identified. Paula explained her need to see the spaces ahead when

preparing for approval. She shared a drawing (Figure 8.2.), to show that her understanding of course approval was something similar to an expedition.

Figure 8.2. Paula's illustration of the course approval journey



Paula explained it like this

> Okay, so I thought this was quite, quite interesting to do. Something I hadn't done before so it helped me think about the whole process. So I did a mountain and a flag on the top because that's, that's the final point that I'm aiming for by getting involved in course review. The early stages here, the concentric circles, are when I'm collecting information and thinking about things, talking to people and I have a folder that I put ideas in, I cut bits out of newspapers, I put briefing papers in or emails, anything that I think will be useful. This period of time takes quite a long time. I find this period of time a bit frustrating because I'm, I'm wanting to go up for my target but I realise that this is the bit that has to engage people. I have to engage people at this idea at this time, I have to capture the ideas, I have to appraise the literature, do the critical appraisal of the past course (T2:1).

Paula's narrative suggested that pacing, in relation to time, was important if the possibilities for gaining the best from everyone involved, alongside gathering any useful intelligence were to be realised. Due to this Position's mindfulness of others

progress and where they were located, Boundary Brokers tended to be the most resourceful of all positions involved in the approval process.

Likewise, Jac's narrative also portrayed the importance of looking ahead in order to speculate on the consequences of action before it was taken. Jac's understanding about the value of taking time to plan and reflect was accompanied by lessons learned from her own experience. The first was a recollection from an approval event, one in which a course failed to gain approval. Jac believed failure had happened because the team had not accounted for the space available for learning in the course structure 'it was almost as if I think we'd taken the existing diploma and tried to shoehorn it into a degree' (T1:4). Space and time for learning was a consistent tension across all positions in this study, except for the Governance Trustee. This position was focused on getting the overall project of approval accomplished, rather than being concerned with details that were not their responsibility. Whilst pressure on time relating to the approval space was a concern, and for others led to disillusionment with the process, Boundary Brokers were more interested in discerning the implications, in order to keep moving forward.

> But I mean certainly thinking about the last one, it was so constrained time-wise there wasn't the level for debate. I think, well I don't know, I have the impression that both sides found that equally frustrating, because you've got, here's a question, everybody wants to chip in and answer because we want to demonstrate that we're doing this, but also because that's part of the debate. And actually you don't, you end up with you know, one example and everybody thinking 'oh, I'm not even going to try chipping in because there's no point' which is kind of interesting (Jac T1:13)

Jac believed time was having a compressing effect on space for debate within approval events. Consequently, from Jac's narrative, expediency in the process was a priority, which could lead to staff becoming alienated by the whole process. Nevertheless, we gain a sense from Jac's reflection, her puzzlement with the changes and perhaps critical reflections on the effects of these for future approval events. The Boundary Broker used reflection to capture all perspectives in order to

move forward and take decisive action. The next section of this chapter reveals how action was understood.

Patterns of Action of the Boundary Broker

Patterns of Action represented the second Facet of Experience in the interpretative framework. It portrayed how action was understood and organised in the approval process by each positional identity. Within this Facet, three Influencing Dynamics were represented: Routines, Navigation and Adaptation. These Influences depict how participants' managed rules and power, their capacities for movement around the approval space and capacity to adjust themselves to the demands presented by the process.

Routines: Learning the rules of the game

For those participants who appeared to have adopted the position of Boundary Broker, Routines represented formal and informal rules, which were understood as necessary tools of action in the process. Indeed, as the earlier illustration of this Signature reflects, of all the positions Boundary Brokers were the least effected by them. For instance, Governance Trustees were totally obsessed by the maintenance of Routines, whilst Professional Guardians acted submissively when faced with them. Routines represented rules or boundaries that were actively played. Boundary Brokers achieved this by learning the rules of the game. Paula summarised the stance of this Position and how it dealt with Routines clearly, 'But the games, if you cannot play the game, then you won't get the game finished will you?' (Paula T2:8).

The Boundary Brokers' success in managing Routines emerged for two reasons. Firstly, because those connected to this position had been exposed to normative practices in other organisations that they were part of, and ways these were dealt with, for example, as members of a PB. Consequently, they astutely chose not to marginalise themselves through becoming defensive in their thinking and actions when faced with these. Instead, Boundary Brokers proactively used their knowledge

of Routines to actively manage these boundaries in a tactical way to achieve what was necessary for their team to realise success. A second reason was because those who adopted this position were more attuned to where power resided, for instance, who were the decision makers and how these two factors were mobilised to good effect within the approval arena. Paula's comment about working in a national body belied the micro-political sensitivities of this work.

> In some respects, I'm surprised how sophisticated it is, I'm surprised how political it is, I'm surprised; I probably shouldn't be for any organisation, but I'm surprised how much lobbying there is and a bit of deal making. But what I find is, prior to meetings people say to you, look, I want to put this through, I know you're really interested in education, if you support me on this, then I'll support you on that (Paula T1:4).

Paula's narrative suggested realisation of her own naivety about what happened in organisations. Clearly, she had not worked in such an openly political environment before, yet this did not deter her. Consistent with this position she transferred this insight to reveal the undercurrent of politics and forms of power used in and around approval events.

An important aspect of Boundary Brokers was the capacity to detect and evaluate the formal and informal actions used by individuals and groups to exert their influence on ways things were done. The findings of the data indicated that those aligned with this position, in order to decide whether they could subvert this influence or not, dealt with Routines by assessing the power dynamic underpinning them. An example is given by Jac:

> I sat in assessment boards with others Chairs going through course by course. It became a standing joke when it got to [profession title] and we were going "no there's a mistake" or "no we can't do that", and we were constantly having to go and see the Registry going "but it won't work like that in [profession title]" (T1:7).

Here, Jac highlights a way that she, and colleagues, had found a tactic in the form of a lever to get what they wanted. In this instance, they formally used the power of the PB to oppose the university structure. In the hierarchy of power within the AHP approval process, it would be unlikely that a university would seek to explicitly

contest the requirements of the profession whose degree was being presented. Apart from explicit strategies connected to overcoming the influence of Routines, there were also those more subtle and informal.

Paula stated how, when the new regulatory approval system was implemented, how initially she had not fully comprehended what was required:

> I really found it difficult like lots of people did, because I hadn't really taken on board the fact that they're (the Health Professions Council) only interested in threshold standards, they're not interested in excellence. They don't purport to be, they just; they are just about meeting standards, and if you meet standards, then the course is approved (T1:8)

Although Paula acknowledged the power of the Regulator, her narrative demonstrated an understanding that power wielded in the process was more connected to compliance with the system than the quality of professional education. Indeed, an awareness of Routines forming the basis of external monitoring systems, for example, systems based on targets, may lead those who adopted this position to be prone to "gaming". An example of this was provided by Paula:

> Now they'll take a lead on it [a PB] and produce some documents. What they are particularly good at is, they make it easy for anybody managing a curriculum, so they always give it to you on a plate, which is quite a powerful way of getting their view over. So everything is for [name of profession] for instance, the [name of PB] curriculum has been mapped, to the QAA has been mapped to the HPC, it's been mapped to Skills for Health, and you just print them off. So not only are they directing policy, but they are making it easier for you to enact it. (T1:18).

Paula's narrative exemplified her understanding of this occurrence. Gaming linked to proactive, but subversive action. In this case, explicit specification of requirements combined with certainty about the approval process could invite reactive gaming. The problem with endorsing this approach is, if taken to its conclusion academic leads could become nothing more than automatons of governing bodies around them. In effect, academics could become caught up in overcoming the logistics of the process and sacrifice the purpose of enhancing quality. Apart from recognising the influence of Routines in the process,

participants had to be able to move around the arena in order to adequately deal with them, which is discussed next.

Navigation: Smooth, slick and done their homework

The Boundary Broker position had high capacity to optimise on the Influencing Dynamic of Navigation. The narratives of Jac and Paula demonstrated examples of resources they used enabling them to move around and beyond the micro locality of course approval practice. These resources already appeared to exist within their worldview. In other words, the way that Boundary Brokers differed from other Positions was that their approach included resources that were already in situ, unlike the Enabling Strategist who strategically orchestrated ways to move around the process for the benefit of their course and organisation. Nonetheless, the position of Boundary Broker was tactically astute as the Enabling Strategist, and their resultant action was smooth enough to be almost imperceptible. In other words, they had done their homework about what would happen in the process and about those who would be present. Paula explained it like this

> I honestly think approval events are now down to the slickness of the team. I mean you've got to have a decent course, but actually you can still hide a lot, you can still talk a lot. You can basically; one of the reasons I am involved in [names of evaluative agencies cited] is, I know exactly for each of those, I know what the hot spots are. I know where they are going to be lifting the stone, because I know what's politically important in those organisations at that time, and therefore you can fix the presentation of what you put forward, quite effectively (T1:25).

Paula's experience indicated she relished the Boundary Broker style of working in different spaces. She purposefully used her insider-outsider status whilst working externally to accrue valuable knowledge of 'the hot spots'. Accordingly, those who adopted this position would appear confident in their own proficiency of presenting a course favourably, at the same time as having an appreciation of micro-politics, which surrounded the process.

Likewise, Jac presented another resource that was consistent with managing the Influence of Navigation by this position, through attracting collaborative partners to fend off challenges from elsewhere:

> I mean there was a guy called the Dean of the Modular Course, who, I've no idea what his equivalent would be here, but I mean he was incredibly helpful, and I mean we were always going and talking to [name removed] who I say was the Dean of the Modular Course, always going and talking to him and saying 'we've got a problem. This isn't going to work'. And his attitude was, 'okay, we'll try and make it work' and then you know, there were the Associate Deans who often had to try and implement the rules who were then going 'no, but look, our rule says this', and trying to work out the rules, so yeah. But the Dean of the Modular Course, he was very helpful (Jac T1:7).

Jac's narrative belies the use of her knowledge gained by moving around the system to access others who could help her, as well as being aware of those who may use their position power to create barriers in moving through the process.

Handling the Dynamic of Navigation was also guided by the distinct capacity of Boundary Brokers to be aware of who the stakeholders were in the wider context and consequently their likely agenda. The implication was if course team members were aware of what each stakeholders' interests were then it was much easier to be strategic in ensuring that these views were heard. For example, Paula regarded Commissioners as having a monetary interest and be required to submit their business plans. However, Jac was mindful of the contribution of practitioner representatives, in this instance there was caution. Of clinician involvement she commented, 'I think people have lost the national picture. If you ask clinicians to contribute they are not able to, on the whole look broadly' (T1:17). Jac inferred, based on prior knowledge, that future involvement of clinicians in the process may require moderation. This was a key concern that may adversely affect the approval process since there was a possibility that such groups would not be representative due to specialist interests predominating. Due to their proximity with practice, clinicians may be considered by Commissioners as closest to assessing what was needed in practice from educational providers. During the critical review stage of

the process these views may sway the panel and unintentionally have a compressing effect on other areas in the curriculum, alongside scope for developments.

Adaptation: Pushing the boundaries and pushing the rules

The adaptive aspects of this position were shown by the high levels of responsiveness and confidence of those associated with it. Consequently, Boundary Brokers preferred to push against requirements for conformity in the approval arena. Yet, approval was also valued and associated with renewal, as typified in Jac's definition, it was space 'to change and create things' (T1:11). Indeed, for them flux appeared to be intrinsic to the process. In keeping with the style of this position understanding, the process involved the recreation or a retelling of the course; a scenario in which Boundary Brokers acted as mediators between cultures surrounding the course and the vehicle used to realise it. They appeared to do this by being responsive to circumstances presented by the environment and through observing those in the approval process who made adjustments to deal with new situations, and those who did not.

The Boundary Broker approach saw the new approval processes as beneficial. Whilst emphasis on efficiency of the system was undeniably disconcerting for all, except Governance Trustees, through being adaptive Boundary Brokers, they used the pace of approval to their advantage.

> I think the positive things about moving towards the new system is I think it was very cumbersome and took a long time to get things ready for delivery. So now you can pick up initiatives, put a course together quite quickly that responds. So we did a masters course [title] and it was the first one that had ever been done in the UK but we really saw the market, wrote it, got it approved, got a cohort in, and did that really quickly. Whereas the old system would have taken a long time to do that (Paula T2:17).

This example shows how Paula was prepared to seize an opportunity presented by a change in practice to the advantage of her area. The above narrative, in order to achieve the purpose, suggests that Paula needed to take on an efficient guise. Such a stance demonstrates how purpose and process can be connected productively.

An area of difficulty was connected to the tension created by professional courses having to comply with both professional, statutory body requirements and host university structures. Analysis of the data showed a form of adaptation used, that was characteristic of those that may adopt this position, was through using rules against themselves. Jac described a method that was typical of this identity. On the surface of her story, she showed how the parameters in which she needed to work were acknowledged 'The university set us rules and we worked to fit into their rules, and so we fitted the modular structure' (T1:5). Yet, Jac also used different rules, the rules of a PB, to overcome the institution's directive. Jac explained a useful backup in proceedings to say:

> The PB says we have to do this" and we could then override university rules, so there was always a tension between the professional bits and the university rules, and trying to fit it all in (T1:6).

Jac's stance was typical of the Boundary Broker since it was one of extending the boundaries of current practice and using the rules to do this.

In contrast, not everyone involved in the process was as equally responsive and Jac and Paula's narratives demonstrated their insight of this from their observations of those who failed to adjust. Paula put it like this:

> It can be quite dangerous though. You could get to the point where you, and you see it happen don't you, where people take one particular road on something and aren't prepared to change that view. So for instance I know of a kind of a situation in [profession name] where somebody went to an approval event where they had strong personal views that placements should be graded and not marked in terms of pass or fail. And the course team put forward an argument that was based on pass or fail and there was a real, they ended up being in discussion with the panel and so that had implications for them (T2:5).

Paula indicated how at an approval event, course team members should not become fixated on projecting their own ideas to the detriment of being unaware of what the priorities of Visitors or Accreditors were. Indeed, it seemed that Boundary Brokers were not subjectively involved in specific ideas, but tended to hold with

the values that underpinned relations and actions, which enabled them to be as adaptive as they were.

Interactions of the Boundary Broker

Interactions are the Facet of Experience connected to different forms of interactions each positional identity undertook with others. It consists of two Influencing Dynamics: Networks and Translation. Networks presented as the different capacities each Position had to maximise on the connections they had with others around them in the process. Whereas Translation was the Influence connected to the capabilities of participants to interact with others from different spaces than their own familiar ones.

Networks: Straddling across

As Boundary Brokers, Jac and Paula had amassed large networks. In the approval process, dealing with the Influencing Dynamic of Networks meant optimising on opportunities to observe and connect with others. Typically, this position was sustained by different contacts across the approval space. Whilst those in this position held senior academic roles in the organisations in which they worked, commonly they did not hold manager-academic positions, for instance, linked with the academic leadership of a department. Such a responsibility may have constrained their aptitude for moving beyond the mindset and surroundings of their course team. Boundary Brokers opted to make the most of their networks and straddle across various communities in different sectors. Indeed, an inability to do so would deny this position the prospect of valuable information. The knowledge gained from these exchanges supported new understandings; affording this position different ways to think, act and relate that could be advantageous in the approval process.

Both Jac and Paula initiated and engaged in networking relations to solve challenges. Paula saw networking as spanning across various organisations, as she reflected ‘I think on the whole people do; there are a number of people who

straddle across and sit in different areas' (T1:12). In relation to course approval, she told me how these formative relations facilitated proposed courses to be contemporary. Jac's narrative demonstrated how she facilitated this interaction in bringing networks together for a common purpose at local level:

> I arranged course planning meetings and everybody was there and we'd draw up module, you know, we'd come back and talk about our modules and do the module reviews, and we had external people, so there were local [profession name] managers, people from the university, but local managers and external academics who sat in on the meetings as we tried to chew it around and come out and go 'but that wasn't what I agreed (T1:8).

Though Jac's narrative describes how she facilitated bringing together people from different areas this was not without difficulty since bringing diverse networks together, even with shared purpose, was challenging. Jac recalled a potential problem with collaborations involving a broad range of people, which, in this instance, may have contributed to a course she had been connected with, not gaining approval. As she put it, this culminated in everyone being involved:

> Without actually working out how this whole thing fits together. We weren't completely incorporated into the university. There was a big transition going on into the university from the independent schools, but without working out how the university structure worked, and the bits around that (T1:4).

This narrative is interesting because it provides a view about what may happen when groups working for a shared purpose are concerned with getting the job done, in other words executing the process, rather than aligning this with the outcome. This may have been because whilst this group of people had an interdependent interest they originated from different organisational cultures, possibly with different values and motivations for the approval of an AHP course.

Similar to Jac's challenge, Paula suggests that though networks delivered benefits, not all staff were in a situation to have supportive contacts in the same way as she did. She shared her reflections following attendance at a national event:

> People were talking about how's it gone really, it's like a year on parole, and both people were emphasising that it is quite lonely and isolated now in HE particularly for a course leader, and that to have somebody that they felt

> could be a mentor outside of the institution was really helpful, they were able to talk things over that they wouldn't be able to do elsewhere (T1:28).

Paula's narrative illustrates two interesting points regarding networks. Firstly, the networks of some staff may be limited due to their location within the organisational hierarchy. Perhaps this insight was a reason for Boundary Brokers to avoid involvement in roles that would tie them down to one place. In Paula's story she identified that course leaders may become isolated. Secondly, course leaders commonly had delegated responsibility for compiling course documents. However, due to the location of pre-registration courses in the competitive environment for commissioning contracts it could be difficult for such staff to network with others outside of their university to gain support since to do so may break some commercial confidences that a university was seeking to make with a competitive market. Maximising professional networks was one means of receiving feedback on ideas in a confidential, non-threatening way. An unintended consequence of this form of networking might be to broaden the base of the professions at a time when their power was being displaced by the new regulatory framework.

So, both Paula and Jac were able to optimise on the Dynamic of Networks to benefit their own area. Participating in these opportunities was beneficial for their own status and allowed them to gather knowledge from other areas although utilising the opportunities to be on various sides and accessing insider-outsider knowledge was important, as Paula commented 'I think because my role allows externality, it means I have to deliver' (T2:11). Yet, to convert external know-how there was also needed the capacity to translate this knowledge locally. The last part of this section discusses this challenge from the position of Boundary Brokers.

Translation: Working out the language of approval

Although Boundary Brokers were mobile and successfully used tactics to navigate challenges and adapt their approach these tactics were useless within the approval process if individuals were unable to interact and understand others. The Influence

of Translation, then, was understood as the capacity of a positional identity to interact with others from different spaces.

Whilst each of the positions managed Translation in varying degrees, Boundary Brokers were the most proactive in understanding the language of approval. This commitment supported their style of being poly-relational and generating several layers of Translation within the approval process. This was in sharp contrast to the single mode of interaction that the Governance Trustee relied upon, or the "Mission Impossible" approach to translation of Professional Guardians. What was most illuminating from the data of staff connected to the identity of Boundary Broker was that management of the Influence of Translation was as much concerned with acquiring the tools to do so, as was noting trends in forms of dialogue and how these were perceived by others within the approval arena. This led the Boundary Broker to adopt various approaches to dealing with Translation.

The first and most obvious approach to the Dynamic of Translation by Boundary Brokers was through the use of tools. These tools were used in two ways, either those directly applied by themselves, or working with others as intermediaries. A key tool adopted by them was language. Jac's narrative was typical of the Boundary Broker. She told me how she felt when the programme she was part of moved into unfamiliar surroundings:

> I hadn't got a clue what was going on because its only as you get into this job when you've been in it a while that you begin to work out the language of curricular, because before, you know, you read the aims of a course, and they don't make any sense at all (T1:3).

To help Jac become effective in preparations for approval a key pointer was familiarity with the language. She explained 'I was then commissioned to learn to speak "poly"' (Jac T1:4) and through building up her networks in the new institution she became familiar with 'modules', and how these 'and the whole thing fitted together' (Jac T1:4). So the capacity to use the language provided a threshold effect, of moving from a space of uncomfortable ignorance to another where connections and possibilities could be realised unlike before. Apart from

being able to decipher language the capacity to convert understandings also involved the ability to reflect back terms in use. Paula described one of her methods was 'you try and make it as safe as possible by getting as informed as possible and then you would pitch your delivery' (T2:4). This deliberate means of using a particular style on communications suggested this approach would allow easier interaction between the approval panel and the course team. The second tool used by those who appeared to adopt this position was through supporting others in their capacity to communicate in the approval space. Here Jac and Paula used themselves as intermediaries. Jac recalled how she had acted:

> Questions were often devolved to me and then I knew I was orchestrating them onto, and then going, 'Okay we're going to have that as a question, that's fine, we've got answers to it, and we can explore this and debate it and I'm going to hand that over', and getting everybody chipping in (Jac T1:13).

Jac's reflection from an approval event shows how she was able to hone the strengths of the team to best effect because she knew the strengths of each person in it, and was able to match this (their language) with the questions presented. Likewise, Paula identified her role in managing the event meant including those team members, which she knew had better translation ability than hers, due to their expertise. Paula, particularly, exemplified instances where she worked as a translator herself through engaging and positioning practitioners so that they might appreciate perspectives different to their own. The outcome was to engage practice colleagues in futures thinking which would inform a course proposal. As Paula stated 'it was almost getting them to stop thinking about how things used to be and try and think about how things are'. This form of translation involving stakeholders was challenging yet fundamental to the course approval process, since it involved scoping a product fit for the future.

This futures thinking, which involved the ability to assess the wider context and its potential ramifications for educators and practitioners was characteristic of this position. Therefore, the capacity to maximise on the influence of Translation,

rather than see it as a barrier, gave those such as Jac and Paula an advantageous start on how they might maximise their networks and navigate through the process.

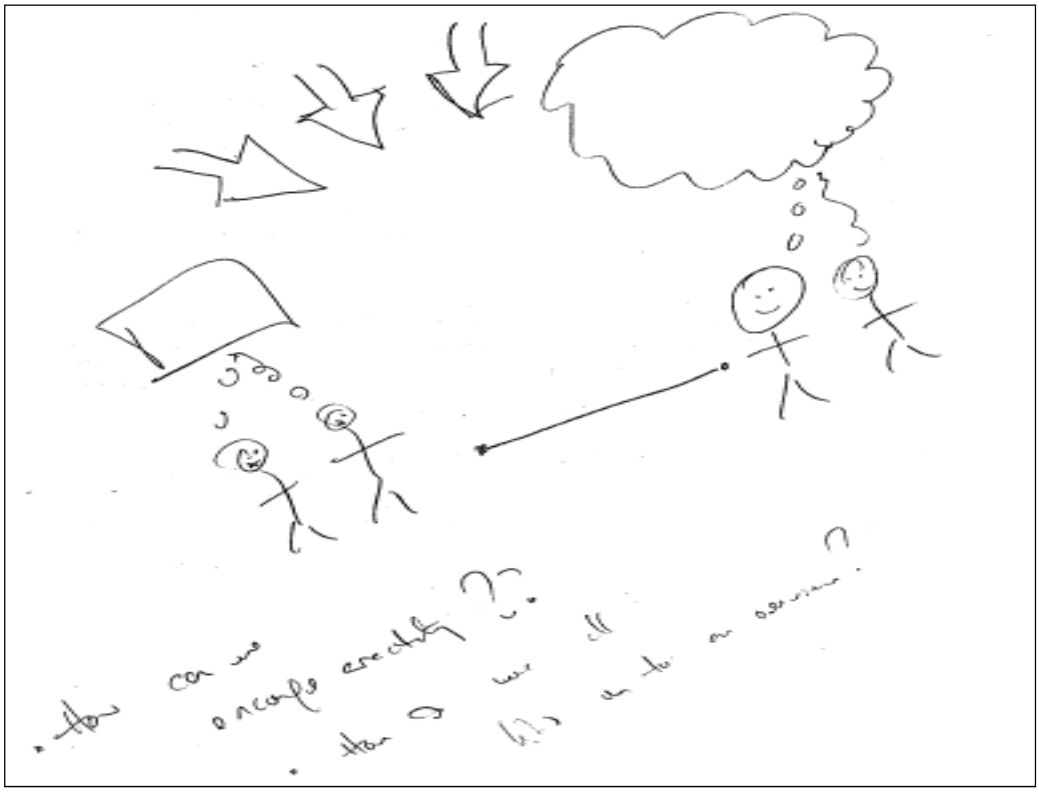
Although both appeared to be open and confident to face challenges, the future development of the approval process seemed less bright to both of them. Paula had stated earlier that she believed streamlining of the approval system was a good thing. She appeared to believe that something was being lost by the mono-language that might pervade in the future. Paula believed that in the traditional system there had been some benefits in the activity of translation due to the variety of HE colleagues, which a course team needed to translate their course to:

> actually then, you did have say a scientist looking in on it all, or an Engineer looking in on it, you had a wider view from your colleagues across the university about what a programme was about. You had to explain things didn't you, you had to explain, "I don't understand this so perhaps you could let me know why it's really important". So I think we've lost some of that (T1:25).

Paula went on to explain this multidisciplinary approach had now been replaced by a more efficient process involving fewer disciplines and more bureaucrats.

Interestingly, such a scenario (Figure 8.3) was also depicted by Jac in a picture she shared with me about what course approval meant to her now.

Figure 8.3. Jac's Illustration of Course Approval



Jac explained her picture in which she had depicted a scenario of the process that involved a 'tug of war'. Included in the picture are two groups vying for control over the course. These two groups, presented at either end of the rope, were at odds. One group was represented by a square bubble, which portrayed a different way of seeing course approval from the one with a less defined shape above their heads. Jac stated the three large arrows depicted other numerous stakeholders involved in the course approval process. There was no common understanding.

Her concern for the future of the approval process echoed Paula's view. Jac was concerned that communication between all those involved was now difficult. I understood this as possibilities for Translation dwindling, since scope to interpret of what counted as a course, not just between course teams and evaluative agencies, but also between clinicians and educators themselves may become limited or none existent.

Summary

The existence of the positional identity of the Boundary Broker acknowledges that the demands of the course approval process in degree courses with professional, statutory regulatory requirements could be successfully navigated. Boundary Brokers were not only adaptive as contributors; they also seemed to pass on this knowledge to benefit the areas and people with which they worked.

In comparison with the other three positional identities, what became noticeable was how those who adopted this position were much more transformative in their approach than the others' were. In contrast, at least for the Governance Trustee and Enabling Strategist, approval was a task that needed to be achieved. Whereas Boundary Brokers appeared much less driven by the corporate, centralist agendas of the organisations in they worked, and so moved towards an event in more open and confident terms. In considering the Facets of Experience framework, clearly the Boundary Broker possessed attributes that enabled approval to resemble an experience, which supported other staff to contribute and deal with the process proactively.

Guided by the organising principles, which underpinned the interpretative framework, the last four chapters have explored the different means participants' in this study dealt with requirements of approval. Familiar across all these stories was the huge impact external monitoring processes, and particularly here, course approval events, had on academic's lives during the year they occurred. However, how their narratives differed were the ways those involved thought, acted and interrelated with others during the process. What appeared clear was that when staff chose to consider how they participated, their experience was different from those who took their reference points wholly from outside themselves, and the professional context in which their course was connected. This 'externalising' effect was particularly demonstrated by the Governance Trustee. Unlike Boundary Brokers, this position had little scope to deal with the Influences of Adaptation or Translation; instead, their contribution seemed concerned with reproduction of

current circumstances. This impending scenario led me to reflect on what the repercussions might be on the character of the approval process and courses approved by it, if only certain positional identities dominated and, therefore, only certain kinds of curriculum counted. The implications of these perplexing circumstances are discussed in Chapter Nine.

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

My inquiry into the experiences of staff within the approval of AHP courses revealed the journey to be complex. In several instances, stories seemed to be demanding to tell and pointed to how individuals were situated amongst dichotomous circumstances. In particular, staff appeared to have struggled with the compelling nature of structured mechanisms, which were integral to the regulatory process, alongside seeking to engage within the creative tasks as part of course and curriculum review. Given these circumstances, similar to Bernstein's (2000) view on the effect of curriculum reforms, in this study the culture of course approval seemed more orientated towards disallowing proposals that would not fit with external requirements, than considering innovative ideas for curriculum development generated by professional practice interests.

Following the interpretation of narratives in Chapters Five to Eight, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the complexities faced by staff in negotiating the demands of the course approval process. From this study not only were aspects of the process seemingly orchestrated, but also those involved appeared to orchestrate their own 'selves' by adopting a position in the process. The result was that course approval was interpreted within this study as a multifaceted performance. Emerging from the performance of approval, four positional identities were recognised in this study, namely, the Governance Trustee, Professional Guardian, Enabling Strategist and Boundary Broker. This sense of *adopting a position* (termed here as positional identities) influenced not only the journey of those involved through the process, but also that of others, as well as the potential shape and nature of courses being approved.

This chapter seeks to portray how I developed the above perspective; it discusses the implications of this interpretation and is structured as follows. Firstly, I reflect on how my understanding of the course approval journey, through initially focussing on Habermas's theories of knowledge interests, became repositioned. This shift was initially reflected in an understanding about the experience of course approval that

resembled a collection of competing interests or interest games; to a view that showed how positional identities, adopted by staff, may support different outcomes, not only for the process itself, but also the kinds of courses offered to students. Secondly, two particular theories that informed my thinking, the work of Bernstein (2000), and Barnett and Coate (2005) are discussed in relation to the study. Thirdly, the development of a conceptual map provided the basis for a dialogue between practice and theory. In other words, a framework from which to reflect on, and explore the concept of positional identity within course approval processes supported by existing theory. The map itself also provided the basis for four 'positional imprints' to be drawn. Each of these maps show diversity in ways the approval process, and other similar external monitoring approaches, might be dealt with by those involved. The fourth section was prompted by generative questions, which arose from a collective view of the positional imprints. The impact of different combinations of positional identity, understood here as 'co-presence', on the approval process are deliberated upon in relation to the concepts of resilience, rigidity and resourcefulness.

Section 1: Repositioning understandings from interest games to positional identities

Based on early interpretative glimpses into the experiences of staff, as presented in Chapters Five to Eight, I initially understood change in regulatory policy had resulted in the course approval of pre-registration AHP degrees, to have become largely a prescribed and officious process. Furthermore, accompanying these changes, the type and number of stakeholders appeared to present particular challenges to course teams. In the first section of this chapter, I will discuss how my understanding of the approval journey became reoriented from a perspective based on experiences of course approval as a collection of interest games, to a view which represents how staff appeared to have adopted different positional identities in the process.

The process of course approval as a collection of interest games

To secure a critical grasp of the experience and circumstances in which approval preparations and events occurred, I was initially drawn to the work of Habermas. Specifically, my focus centred on an aspect of Habermas's work that exposed connections between the individuals' experience of approval and rationalisation of this within their 'lifeworld'; as a result of the competing and pervasive 'knowledge interests' from those within the surrounding environment (Habermas, 1984). These circumstances are discussed next.

Within the course approval process staff experiences consistently suggested a sense of those involved being part of a system. Most of these experiences were connected to ways that the presentation of a course, for approval, was shaped by various stakeholders. This shaping action occurred by those who were both internal and external to course teams. These connected with Habermas's view that a 'life structure is an interest structure' (1987:211) constituted by ways of knowing and acting, or 'knowledge-constitutive interests' (1987:196). To summarise simply, within a life structure Habermas (1987) identified these ways of knowing or conditions in three ways, namely:

- 'Cognitive or technical interests' are associated with rationality and reason, realised through means of control, such as, measurement and prediction (Habermas, 1987: 198)

- A 'practical interest' is related to the process of interaction which supports mutual problem solving (Habermas, 1987: 203)

- 'Emancipatory interests' or 'an interest in actions of free will' (Habermas, 1987: 209) are reflexive, and have a focus on freedom from constraints.

Emerging from participants' stories my initial thoughts were that the current systems of external monitoring swayed towards serving technical interests. This was clearly illustrated across the narratives. What came across, strongly, was that course teams seemed to fit their course proposals to the standardised frameworks

of evaluative agencies, and prescriptions of course structure specified by the universities they worked in. During this early interpretative stage, I produced an illustration of these ideas and presented these as a theoretical framework in progress (Appendix Three). At that point in my thinking, Habermas's theory provided a useful vantage point from which to argue that the approval process appeared to have become derailed by the predominating influences surrounding preparations and events. However, I became aware of some unhelpful assumptions, linked to my initial naivety in interpreting this work. Revealing these assumptions caused me to rethink the continued use of Habermas's theory of knowledge interests as a way to develop an understanding of the approval process.

An initial problem I encountered was use of this theory could lead to a representation of the process, in which it could be presumed some interests prevailed over others. Furthermore, if these interests could all be balanced, by observing principles of communicative rationality (Habermas, 1984), the state of an 'ideal speech situation' might be achieved in the process. However, this goal seemed somewhat utopian here since this view did not sufficiently take into account the political and policy contexts in which approval practices were situated.

Arising from the above, another challenge to pursuing Habermas's theory of knowledge interests (1984) was the likelihood that imperatives driving current approval practices would alter. Though given the necessary policy directive to enhance protection of patients and the public from incompetent practitioners, it was unlikely that the imperative of regulation would disappear. Therefore, possibilities for the power dynamics between the regulated and the regulator, as identified by Jackson (1998), would hardly become equal. The issue, I held, also had a connection with a critique of Habermas by Giddens (1985). Giddens doubted how the concept of the 'lifeworld', in which knowledge interests reside, were to be defended since to overcome these challenges would necessitate a fundamental change in the construction of the political and economic influences acting on it, which was unlikely. Additionally, reflecting on participants' narratives, whilst the majority of those disliked the process, all believed the activity was, in itself, a felt

necessity, since traditional approaches of assuring professional accountability to patients and the public were considered to have become outmoded.

A further problem that I believed existed in the use of Habermas's theory of knowledge interests connected to the approval process was that this particular thinking frame might promote a polarised perspective. Such a limited view could lead to a restricted examination of the actions of those involved in the approval process. An example of polarising the experience of approval through using the theoretical lens of knowledge interests is supported by Said (1994), who argued Habermas's framework of knowledge interests appeared to overlook the existence of inequalities within society. The consequence of this viewpoint was, as Said (1994) claimed, that such a standpoint would do little to counter the prevailing forms of oppression, which may exist.

From this research amongst the crowded space course approval had become, it was clear not everyone involved participated, or had the resources to do so, equally. For example, those who had the capacities for high 'translation' and for 'navigation' outside of familiar spaces across open 'networks', and did not place limiters on their thinking through becoming bound by immediate circumstances, seemed to be better able to cope than others. The point can be illustrated, here, for example, by contrasting the position of Boundary Broker with that of Professional Guardian.

Professional Guardians largely resided at the department level or were linked to a particular discipline. From the narratives, whilst those who adopted this position possessed a commanding knowledge of their subject, commonly their perspective primarily attended to a specific area. Their networks, in other words links with others, were closely connected to the immediate professional sphere of interest. Consequently, these localised actions and interests limited their capabilities for interpretation and to interact with others from unfamiliar communities outside of their own. Within the course approval process, such limitations became evident. Those who portrayed the Professional Guardian position found it particularly difficult to comprehend and adapt to the business orientation of new stakeholders

involved, for instance, the Commissioners. Professional Guardians did not understand the role of these 'purchasers' as stakeholders in the process. Additionally, participants representing this positional identity seemed particularly vexed by the consumerist values that commissioners brought to the situation, which Professional Guardians believed had little to do with HE or equipping future healthcare professionals for treating patients.

In comparison, Boundary Brokers, who also contributed as course team members, showed a tendency frequently to have interests beyond their professional area, often at national level. Those adopting this position, because of their levels of expertise, commonly worked outside of their course team supporting more generalised cross-institutional projects; for example, related to furthering internationalisation of curricula. Due to this broad exposure across other areas of practice, Boundary Brokers were more easily able to adapt to others in the approval process who presented a different agenda. Rather than resist these challenges by viewing them as barriers, Boundary Brokers used their extended capacity for interpretation to benefit their own teams by presenting course proposals using 'acceptable' dialogues, but on their own terms. This capacity to be proactive was particularly supported by the privileges afforded to those taking up this position to work outside the area of their department and university. As a consequence, their worldview was broader. So, potential for dealing with difference and ambiguity was much greater.

As a consequence of the above challenges in relation to this study, I believed Habermas's theory of knowledge interests (1984) was limiting. His concept of knowledge interests had, however, helped to further hone the reason for this research, that the circumstances in which approval processes occur are not neutral. Indeed preparations and events seemed to be influenced by a variety of competing factors. Furthermore, this perspective prompted further questions not just about the part(s) staff held within the approval journey, but also the ways these differed and consequences of this diversity. Subsequent interpretative reflections

highlighted the need to reconsider the part(s) played by those involved, and how this might be re-contextualised in order to form a more crystallised view.

Section 2: Informing stances

The purpose of this section is to discuss two theories that informed my thinking about course approval events and the potential of positional identities being taken up within them. The exploratory conceptual map of positional identity that emerged from theory combined with findings of the study is presented in Section Three.

The most pertinent theoretical perspectives I found to inform this study was the work of Barnett, Parry and Coate (2001) Barnett and Coate (2005) and Bernstein (1996; 2000). Together, these informing stances were used to illuminate the different Facets of Experience of the approval process, and to discern how contextual processes shaped these constructions. Both space and outlook(s) with which to 'sense back' by moving through the data with theory was provided. In particular, the nature of their ideas, as explained subsequently, supported the character of this study in seeking to reveal the 'commonplaces of narrative inquiry' linked to dimensions of place, sociality and temporality (Clandinin, Pushor and Orr, 2007). In relation to this study, firstly, Barnett and Coate's (2005) work will be discussed, followed by Bernstein (2000).

Informing stance I: Barnett and Coate's conceptualisation of engagement in curriculum change

Based on earlier research and several conceptual papers by Barnett, Parry and Coate (2001), subsequently Barnett and Coate (2005) argued that serious challenges were facing the curriculum. Barnett and Coate (2005) especially observed that design of curricula had become preoccupied in 'tasks of filling of various kinds' (2005:3). In considering both the underpinning literature and data from this study, I agreed with Barnett and Coate's view.

Emerging from the research an important part of the course approval journey for staff were the informing aspects of curriculum review and appraisal of their courses. Here, staff highlighted these two things more by their absence, than their presence in the process. It seemed due to the steer given for an efficient process, creative spaces had become concertinaed by managerialist practice. By this, I mean the focus of staff had become overly determined by external reference points, rather than of spaces for debate about curriculum and discipline pedagogy, which seemed to be a lesser priority. Indeed, given the above cultural conditions surrounding approval, another proposal could be made that in order to construct an engaging curriculum, staff need to revisit how they re-engage themselves. The threat of not doing so may compromise on opportunities for debate about the purposes of pre-registration education, and these conditions, as Lucas and Bolton (2008) argued, will lead the University to lose vitality such that 'an easily governed university is no university at all' (2008:15).

Barnett and Coate's proposal involves engaging with curriculum in a transactional way, rather than a mechanical one. They propose that engagement is engendered by working with three challenges or domains, namely 'knowledge, action and being' (2005:48). These are illustrated in the model presented in Figure 9.1.

- The 'knowledge domain' refers to kinds of knowledge required in a changing world, for example discipline specific competencies.

- The 'action domain' places importance on the student's 'in action' by using their abilities 'or competencies acquired through doing'.

- The 'being domain' is one in which the student's 'self' comes into play and reflects 'certain kinds of human capacity and dispositions' in gaining self-awareness of their 'selves' and those with others.

Figure 9.1. Barnett and Coate's domains of engagement in curricula

(Barnett and Coate, 2005:70)

In their initial research underpinning the 'Domains of Engagement in the Curricula', the authors utilised the above framework as a basis for modelling configurations of curricula across five different subject areas, in six universities. From their research, the authors concluded that the challenge lay in ensuring that not only each of the three domains was adequately represented, but also each was integrated with one another. Prompted by the recurrent narrative images that emerged from the data of this study linked initially to disconnected practices, dialogic difficulties and crowded spaces I speculated on how each of these three domains reflected the ways staff coped with the challenges of the approval process.

This initial thinking informed the interpretative frame presented in Chapter Four. The interpretative framework was used, originally, to underpin each positional identity and was understood as being constituted by three 'Facets of Experience', namely, Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action and Interactions. These overarching 'facets', individually and combined, were used as organising principles and helped to generate an explanation of the complexity of staff experience represented by their stories of course approval. Each of these stories showed substantive differences and similarities, which led to the tentative identification of four

positions adopted by staff in the process. Barnett and Coate's model contributed to this thesis by providing the basis from which to examine the consequences of 'co-presence' or different degrees of presentation by each position in the process. The implications of what I identify as the implications of co-presence in the approval process are discussed in Section Three, the last part of this chapter. Though Barnett and Coate's (2005) work provided a basis from which to consider different patterns of presentation by stakeholders I was, however, still left thinking about why things were this way, for instance how various influences on those involved affected them differently, and the potential for ways the approval process could differ depending on who was involved. I became interested in Bernstein's work on pedagogic identities.

Informing stance II: Bernstein and re-contextualising pedagogic practice and positional identities

Bernstein was a critical sociologist, as a consequence, he was not solely interested in considering the thinking and action of individuals within the wider contexts of society, but also focused on the 'underlying rules shaping the social construction of pedagogic practice' (Bernstein, 2000:3). Across HE, the breadth of Bernstein's theoretical work has provided the basis for further research in a variety of areas, such as the recognition of students prior learning on entering HE (Harris, 2000), challenges and changes to professional knowledge (Beck and Young, 2005), reconceptualising the relationship between curriculum and assessment (Shay, 2008).

Bernstein, particularly, demonstrated a keenness to ensure his work had the capacity to generate descriptions. The purpose of his work was not to provide 'metatheory' but, instead, to offer models illuminating how pedagogic practices are shaped. Indeed, the growth of Bernstein's work has been supported by requests for clearer explanatory frameworks and tools to analyse changes taking place in areas of practice, such as education, in which regulatory agencies and their practices hold consequences for the identities of those involved (Bernstein and Solomon, 1999). Moore (2001), who has provided one of the many reviews of Bernstein's work

on pedagogic practice, commented that Bernstein's theories offered a set of conceptual devices, which held within them the capability of generating models applicable to all aspects of professional life.

The course approval process, characterised by relationships between different stakeholders, provides one such example of practice in professional life. In such circumstances, staff were located in a struggle amongst the structured, stable mechanisms of governance operating on, and within organisations; and the intuitive, resourceful, dynamic location of themselves as academics and practitioners. The consequences of these cultural conditions were understood in this study as the realisation of a 'positional identity', which was adopted by an individual and reflected particular ways of dealing with their situation. Following Bernstein, each of the four positional identities presented in this study: the Boundary Broker, Professional Guardian, Enabling Strategist and Governance Trustee are recognised as, 'a particular moral disposition, motivation and aspiration, embedded in particular performances and practices' (Bernstein, 2000:65). These performances, or positions that emerged from this research, were connected to how those involved coped with power and control in the process.

The concepts of power (classification) and control (framing) in the course approval process

Central to Bernstein's theories are two interconnected concepts of power and control. Bernstein claimed that within different forms of social reproduction, power serves to 'create boundaries, legitimise boundaries, reproduce boundaries' (2000:5) *between* agencies, groups and individuals. The focus of power, then, is on the relations between things or 'categories'. As a result, Bernstein claimed that the use of power also has the potential 'to produce dislocations' (2000:5).

Referring to an exemplar in this inquiry the notion of power is realised through the different relationships between statutory bodies, for instance, the Regulator and organisations whose staff are required to fulfil the requirements of such bodies. In this case, the kind of power working between the Regulator and HEIs offering pre-registration AHP courses is mandated by the demands of regulatory policy. Though

universities themselves hold the power to grant the award of a degree, in the case of students seeking to gain entry to a profession regulated by the HPC, the course has to have been approved by the Regulator. Without approval, the award does not hold currency, as graduates are only able to apply for registration from approved courses. The situation highlighted, not only demonstrates the extent of power wielded by the Regulator for approving proposed courses, but also the potential power to shape the nature of registrants' education.

The concept of control acts as a conduit for power, and as a result presents as the capacity for socialising people into certain relationships. Bernstein (2000) observed control, then, represented the means used to legitimate communications appropriate to individuals, and different groupings of individuals. From this research, an example of control was shown in the ways certain forms of dialogue had to be used in preparations and events, in order for these (and the staff using them) to be recognised and useable in the process. In sum, Bernstein identified that 'power constructs relations *between* and control relations *within'* (2000:5) different forms of interaction. These two concepts are aligned with two other terms used to underpin Bernstein's theories, 'classification' and 'framing'.

Classification constitutes the nature of the social space in which 'power' is often disguised (Bernstein, 2000:7). For instance, how boundaries or limits are placed on thinking about possibilities for approaches to teaching and learning which may be deemed risky, the styles of communication encouraged, and the subsequent affects on relations between those involved, including how relations are organised. Bernstein distinguished forms of classification as either 'strong' or 'weak' (2000:7). Within a 'strong' classification, each group or individual has a unique identity, language, rules for relating to others. In contrast, a weak classification reflects a disparate identity in which, language is less specific and makes the group more permeable to interactions from others involved.

Linked to the course approval process, regulation and those associated with fulfilling regulatory practices occupy a strong classification, though I would argue a strong classification does not necessarily equate with being better. In the case of

approval, regulation holds a strong classification because of its capacity, through methods of external monitoring, to discern the standards to be reached, and the ways this required evidence is communicated by course teams. Regulatory practice within the approval of health profession courses appears to maintain what Bernstein (2000) identified as a strong degree of ‘insulation’. Insulation is a form of defence against change. In this case, the form of insulation used in course approval is one of external accountability by professionals and respective educational programmes to a regulatory system. A system that is non-negotiable.

The second term linked to Bernstein’s concept of control is ‘framing’, which refers to the means of receiving communication. As Bernstein (2000:12) explained, ‘whereas classification establishes voice, framing establishes the message’. ‘Framing’ acts as ‘an adjuster’ in the limits of relations and dialogue in a specific context. Put simply, framing is related to who gets to control what; a relationship between entities, which Bernstein (2000:12) identifies as, ‘transmitters’ and ‘acquirers’. In this study, the HPC, as the government’s proxy for regulation, is the transmitter of policy, whereas course teams are the acquirers of it. As ‘acquirers’ of policy, classification in this instance is 'weak', as those impacted by policy change are required to bring things together. As part of the concept of framing, Bernstein (2000) also identified the existence of rules connected to pedagogic practice. Rules are not used, here, in the causal sense. Instead, rules bring attention to different degrees of control over the various features within practice. These features may be temporal (time and space), textual (criteria, translation) or contextual (hierarchy, navigation) features of experience (Bernstein, 2000).

Overall, the point being made here is that depending on the ways power (classification) and control (framing) are orientated, between and within those involved, may influence different approaches in dealing with the demands of course approval and external monitoring activities. As Bernstein (2000) highlighted, changes in classification and framing will produce different modalities, which from this research, emerged as positional identities. Each of the four identities is

substantiated through the lens of an exploratory conceptual map of positional identity presented next.

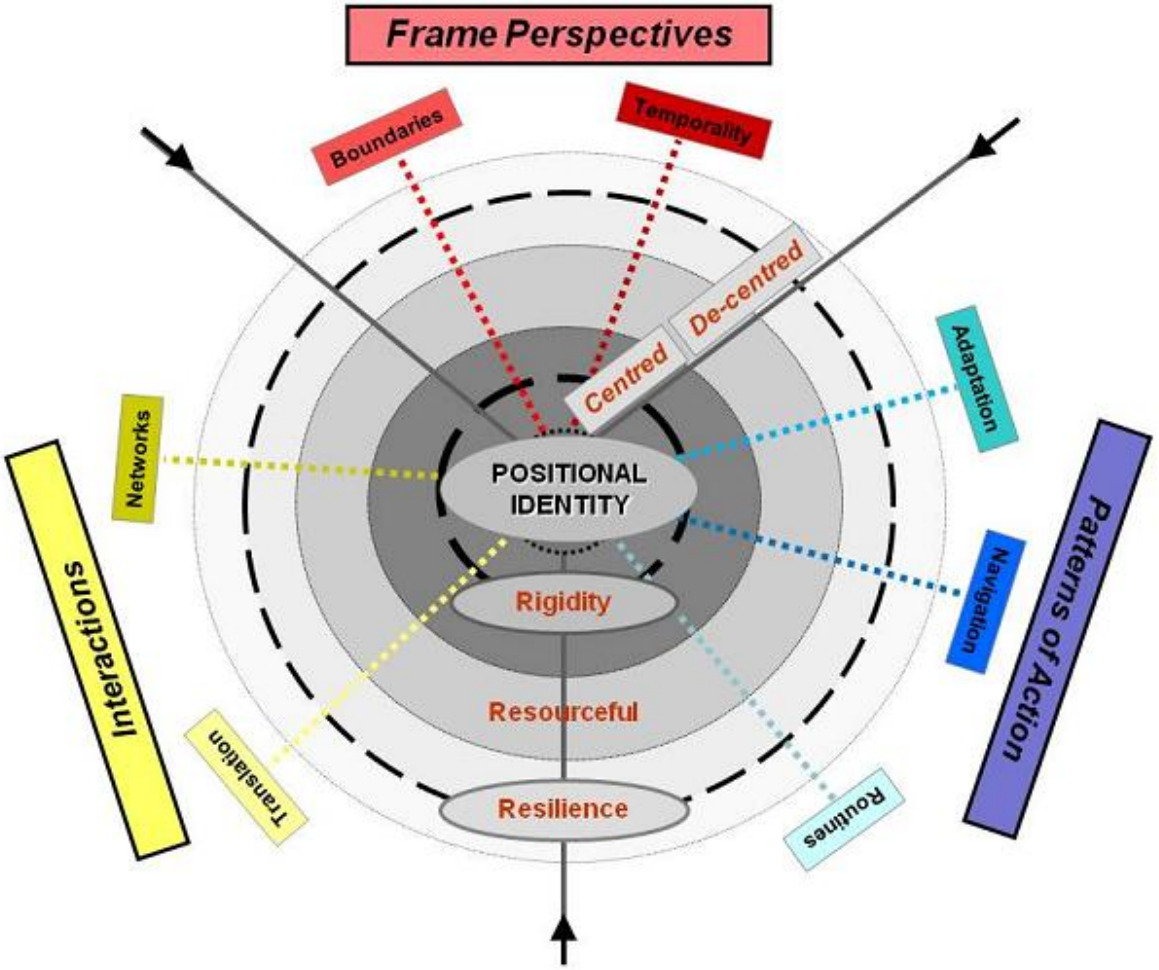
Section 3: An exploratory conceptual map of positional identity

Amongst the shuttlecock moments in my thinking, moving between analysis and interpretation of participants' stories, what increasingly came into view were possibilities for alternative stories for the journey of course approval. As a consequence, informed by the narratives of this study alongside social theory particularly by Bernstein linked to his work *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity* (2000), I began to piece together a simple conceptual map which assisted in exploring and substantiating the concept of positional identities. The intention of this section is not to theorise experience, but rather to stimulate a re-assessment of current conditions and possibilities in which approval scenarios may evolve.

An exploratory conceptual map of positional identity in the course approval process

I relate the application of this exploratory map, particularly, to current process involved in the approval of pre-registration allied health courses in the U.K. Whilst it is understood that generalising from this study is difficult, resonance may arise in connection to other situations, similar to course approval in which other forms of external monitoring occur. These events may happen outside of HE, for example, within NHS organisations or, more generally, in situations where projects are delivered and supported by the involvement of people. Next, the exploratory map is presented, and then discussed and applied in relation to the positions, which emerged from the inquiry. The conceptual map presented in Figure 9.2 offers two possible layers of explanation for interpretation of a positional identity, or particular approach, within course approval; the situational layer and impact layer. A brief overview of both is presented.

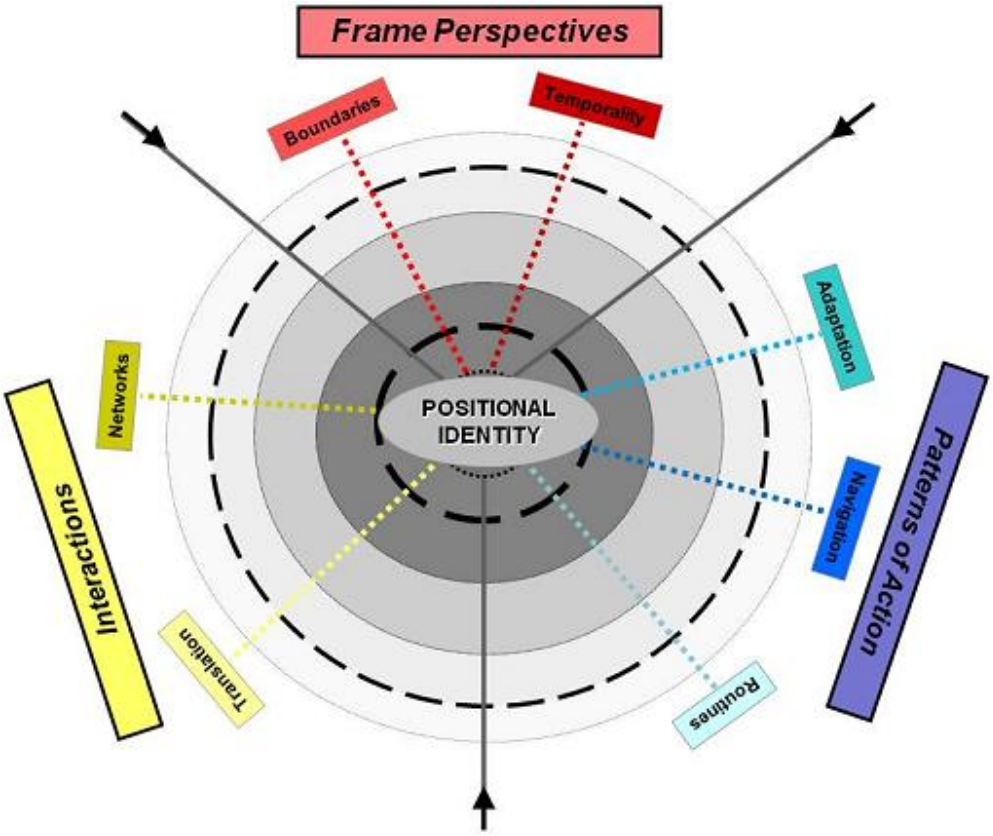
Figure 9.2. An exploratory conceptual map of positional identity within the course approval process



The situational layer

The purpose of the situational layer is to provide a framework on which the imprint of a position, which is discussed subsequently, can be illustrated. The situational layer depicted in Figure 9.3 was based on the organising principles within the interpretative frame outlined in Chapter Four. To assist the reader's understanding, the concept map is reproduced again here, however, with only the situational layer highlighted.

Figure 9.3. The conceptual map of positional identity depicting the 'situational' layer



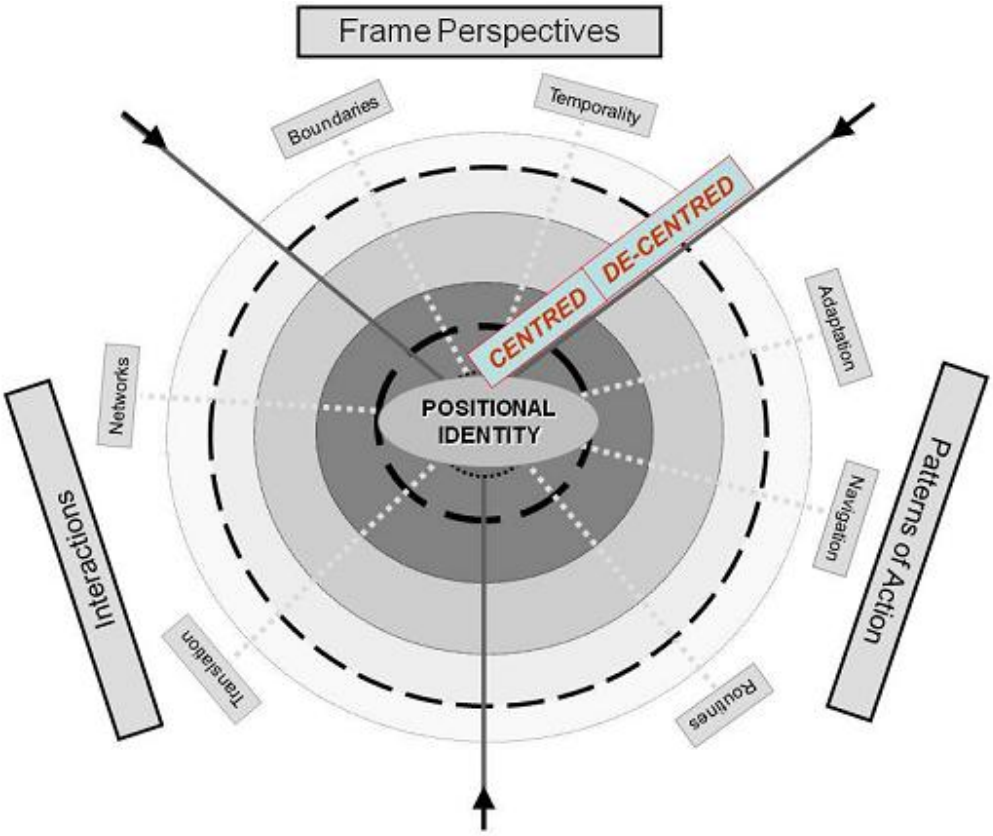
Forming the basis of the situational layer are three 'Facets of Experience' these include: 'Frame Perspectives', 'Patterns of Action' and 'Interactions'. The three

Facets are each accompanied by 'Influencing Dynamics': Boundaries, Temporality, Routines, Navigation, Adaptation, Networks and Translation. Definitions of these were given in Chapter Four and can also be found within the Glossary (Appendix 1). Each of the Influencing Dynamics, developed from the data, were understood as ways in which experience of course approval was controlled or framed by those involved, and others around them. In Figure 9.3, the Influencing Dynamics are represented as trajectories radiating from the centre. To provide a means of comparison, these are presented consistently alongside the Facet of Experience they each related to. For instance, the Frame Perspective Facet has two Influencing Dynamics, Boundaries and Temporality, identified at the top of the map. Different degrees of framing can be drawn onto the concept map to form a provisional 'positional imprint'. These are illustrated and discussed subsequently in this section.

The impact layer

The impact layer interrelates with the 'situational layer'. This second layer of 'impact' identified the way that power or classification within the approval may be represented informed by Bernstein's (2000) modelling of positions and identities applied to the arenas of educational policy. From this research, a position was understood as one, which was 'centred' or 'decentred'. The impact layer is added to the situational layer and presented in Figure 9.4. The nature of centred and decentred positions are delineated next.

Figure 9.4. The conceptual map of positional identity depicting the 'impact' layer



A centred position

A centred position was understood as one which represented ongoing situations in which limitations exist in thinking, acting and interactions with others. Such a position is portrayed as a conduit for directives that are external to itself, which, in turn, must be put out to others. Relationships are hierarchical, and exist on the whole to fulfil the function of centred positions, which was to preserve unchangeability and ensure smooth operations.

A decentred position

In contrast, a decentred position was not one bound by existing conditions. Overall, the stories of such a position were peppered by a futures orientation. In addition, as a result of diverse networks those connected with this position engaged in a variety of relations, which served several purposes. These purposes included, for example, intelligence about the level of detail required by evaluative agencies for a course to be approved, or aspects of the process that may be emphasised by reviewers. Due to the widespread interests of decentred positions, they were not overly focussed on department issues. Indeed, exposure to different ways of working and thinking enabled them to make comparisons between the wider community and what was happening in their own area. The activity of comparing practices acted as a volitional device to support change in local areas. An additional asset of decentred positions was their degree of adaptability and, therefore, capacity to deal with changeability in their surroundings on their terms.

I understood decentred and centred positions similar to what Bernstein terms, 'identity projections' (2000:72). Therefore, the positional identities that emerged from this study, were affected by both the internal process of approval and the external socio-political and cultural contexts surrounding it. In addition, the combination of situation and impact create cumulative reference points, which constituted the imprint characteristic of a positional identity, such as, the Boundary Broker.

The realisation of a positional imprint: Framing, control and positional identities

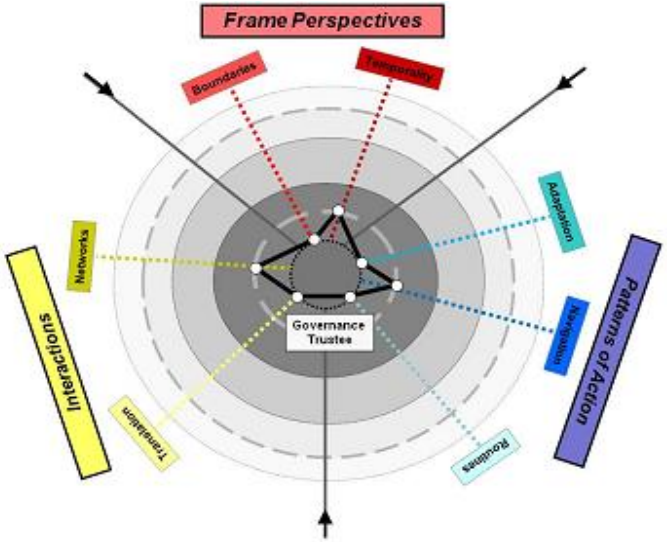
The next part of this section, with reference to Bernstein's (2000) theories, discusses and presents how a positional imprint was depicted for each of the positional identities that emerged from this research. The imprint of each position was realised by considering likely degrees of framing or control, and the cumulative effect of classification or power.

The concepts of 'weak' or 'strong' framing (Bernstein, 2000:13) were considered in relation to each of the four positions. Each position's overall framing, or ways that forms of control connected to each of the Influencing Dynamics, varied. A positional imprint was derived by considering the narrative portraits presented in Chapters Five to Eight. All four positional identities were tentatively mapped against the different degrees of framing. These suggested a tendency towards weak or strong, when considered against each of the Influencing Dynamics. This mapping is recorded in Appendix 14 for each position. The influence of Framing was considered, then, as a continuum presented in Figure 9.5.

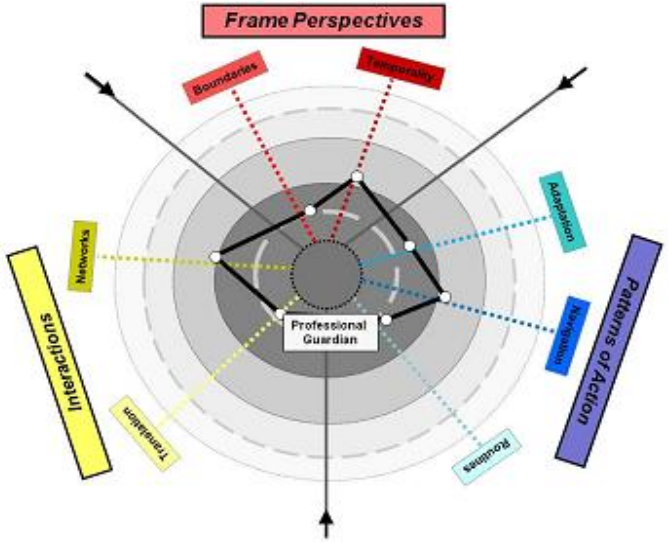
Figure 9.5 Continuum of Framing (Control) developed from Bernstein (2000)

Figure 9.5 explains the degrees of control that are represented by each of the concentric circles, which constitute a Positional Imprint. These are collectively presented in Figure 9.6 and also individually displayed in Appendix 15. Each positional imprint is based on three circles, shown as different shades of grey. Each circle denoted the varying degrees of framing (control) linked to each of the Influencing Dynamics. Therefore, the inner most circle reflected the strongest framing (strong +), the outer circle the least (weak +). For two of the positions the framing of interests was not firmly strong or weak, but tended either more towards strong (strong -) or weak (weak -), the implications are deliberated on later in this chapter.

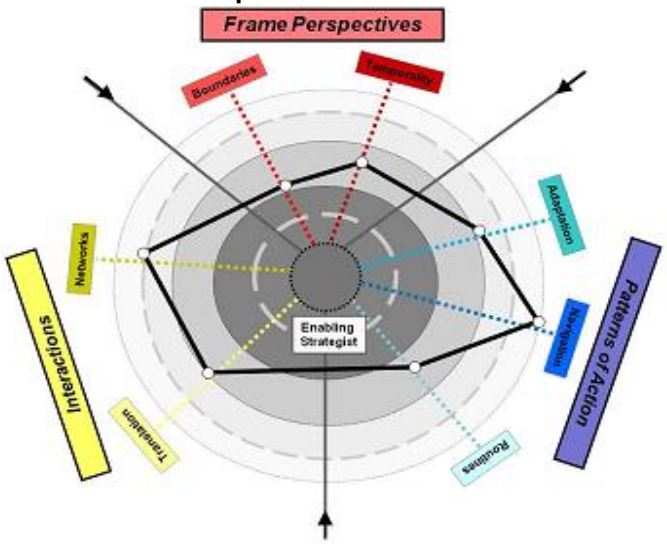
Figure 9.6. Positional imprints: Frame of Influencing Dynamics on staff within the course approval process



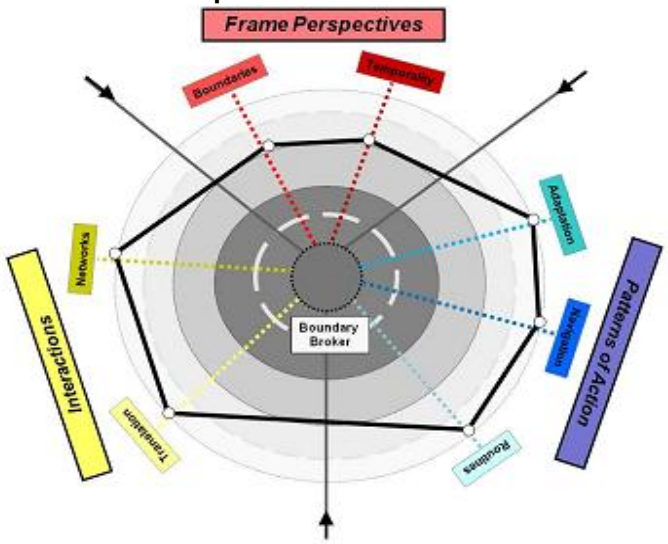
Positional Imprint: Governance Trustee



Positional Imprint: Professional Guardian



Positional Imprint: Enabling Strategist

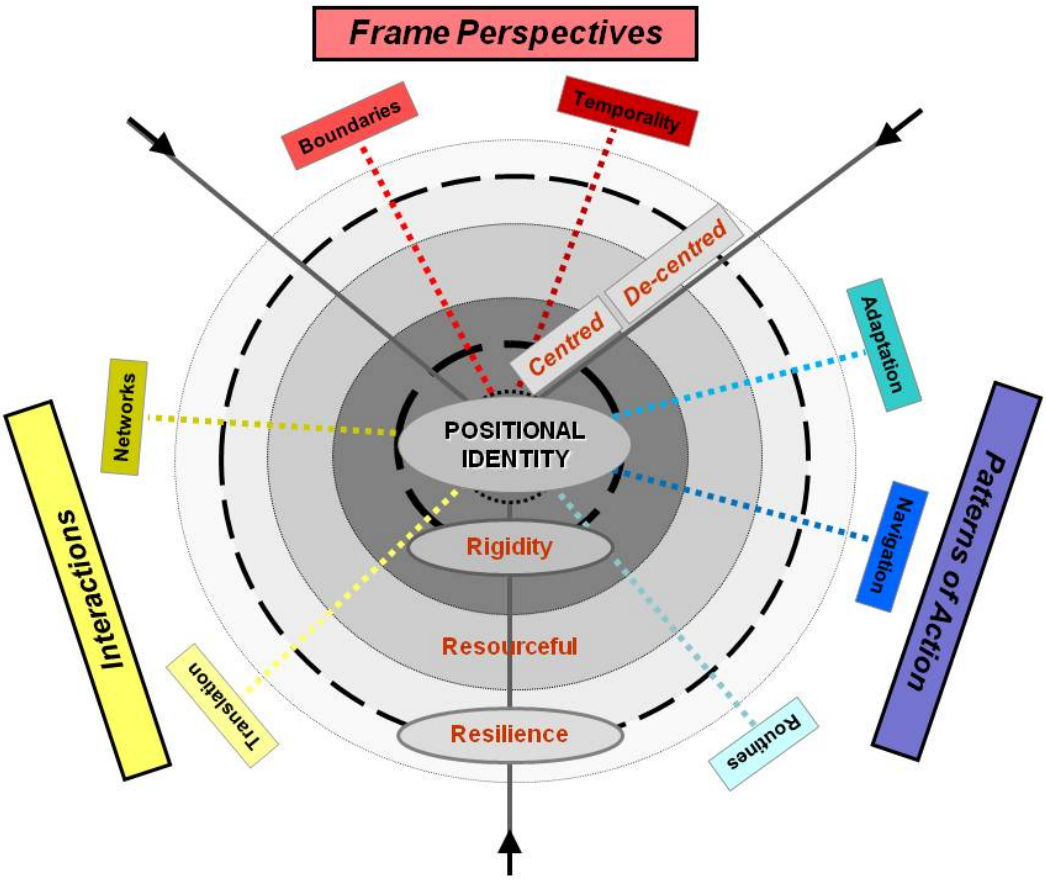


Positional Imprint: Boundary Broker

Classification, power and positional identities

In addition to the affects of framing (control) suggested by differences in the positional imprints, from the study it became clear that the various means with which staff chose to cope with the demands of course approval could be represented by the degree of 'presence' they exuded. The presence of a position during the process, then, was a combination of the power (classification) of their modus operandi, and also degrees of control (framing) within the process. Forms of power were identified in the concepts of resilience, resourcefulness and rigidity as illustrated in Figure 9.7 and discussed next.

Figure 9.7. Positional imprint and forms of power within the approval process



Three forms of power connected to positional identities were distinguished

- centred-rigidity
- decentred-resilience
- resourceful power

Each of these are discussed next in relation to the findings of the study.

The power of centred-rigidity

A position leaning towards centred-rigidity is portrayed by an imprint that is bound towards the centre of the conceptual model. It was the first of the three concepts identified. Such positions are founded on forms of control, which reflect their reference points as being strongly orientated externally from themselves. It is suggested here that external reference points provided a sense of security amongst the demands of approval.

Forms of centred rigidity represented in practice by individuals can be linked to Schon's (1971) notion of the 'stable state'. The idea of the stable state was concerned with placing a high value on unchangeability through maintaining stability. Such a perspective exudes a sense of certainty about how the world is and should be. Emerging from this study stability is preserved by dealing with the 'Influential Dynamics' of control following a rigid, centralising order. Certainties are rooted in rigid orders being re-produced and safeguarded above all else. Safeguarding of stability is predicated by hierarchical moves using dialogue that is ordered and presented in receivable forms.

The power of decentred-resilience

Positions with a leaning towards decentred-resilience represented an imprint that markedly differed from the imprint of centred-rigidity, and the impression it created on approval processes. In sum, such positions were orientated towards forms of control reflecting reference points that were weakly orientated towards

centralist agendas, and instead strongly located within themselves. Their imprint would commonly be dispersed towards the periphery of the conceptual map of positional identity.

From the narratives, those who appeared to have a leaning towards decentredness, were better able to cope with the change process, as part of approval, and also to recover from the disruptions and ambiguities which the centralising, corporate agenda sought to impart on the course teams involved. In other words, such individuals' had the resilience to stick with difficulties as they arose and deal with the demands. Such a stance is enabled through accepting uncertainty.

A position influenced by decentred-power was illustrated by the definition of one participant, who likened course approval to the opportunity for 'throwing all the balls up in the air'. Therefore, uncertainty was embraced. A sense of resilience was enabled by taking the choice to optimise the surrounding 'Influencing Dynamics' particularly of Adaptation, Translation, Networks and Navigation rather than making choices that were foisted upon them by prevailing conditions. However, a decentred-resilient identity does not lose sight of the need to participate in change, and still retain the value base required to achieve the desired outcome. Consequently, in these circumstances there is a strong ownership of the course's underpinning curriculum, alongside the processes involved in securing approval of the course overall. Such a relationship might be enriched by having a stake in various communities that are represented at an approval event. Perhaps, decentred-resilient identities may not only be considered as decentred, but also polycentric. The outcome of decentred power allows the approval process to move away from being a transactional, functional process to a journey that becomes open to opportunities by being transversal. In other words, the different combinations for intersections between those involved and their forms of thinking, action and interaction within the approval space are critically reflected upon. The insights gleaned by this knowledge can, then, be used to powerful advantage.

Between these two forms of power existed a third, termed here as resourceful power. This identity represents a dynamic amalgam of both centred-rigidity and

decentred-resilience. For some, the capacity to deal with power was swayed by mixed allegiances, for instance, towards support of their profession alongside obligations to the organisation in which they worked.

Resourceful power

Resourceful power was moderated by the mix of two perspectives. Whilst those swayed towards this identity portrayed the importance of maintaining a focus on stakeholders who were impacted by the outcome of approval, their Frame Perspective differed in two ways. Firstly, between an understanding of approval focused on realising governance requirements to fulfil the demands of regulation, and secondly an understanding, which was concerned with upholding a specialism or their profession as a priority. To put it another way, resourceful positions often stood in the middle between centred agendas and the decentred wishes of those involved in the process.

Resourceful forms of power resemble what Bernstein terms ‘singulars’ (2000:52). These identities are grounded in particular kinds of knowledge formation, in which there is a dual nature. Bernstein illustrated the dual nature of singulars, as a coin with two faces, although ‘only one face (of this coin) can be seen at any one time’ (2000:54). One face revealed the ‘inner dedication’ towards their subject, the other ‘the profane’ face towards the environs in which they are located characterised by power and managerialism. Whilst resourceful power was labelled so because of a capacity to build trust, manage conflict, access forms of support and mobilise individuals towards a shared purpose, resourceful identities were swayed by capacities to deal with the Influential Dynamics of Translation, Navigation and Networks. Different ways of coping with these Influential Dynamics led either more towards centred-rigidity or in some cases decentred-resilience, such kinds of modulating power meant resourceful identities held potency in various circumstances.

From the discussion so far, it is proposed that the influence of framing and classification on positional identities embodied in the course approval process

enabled the participation of some, and disabled others; it may also imply a relationship between those involved and the kinds of professional courses underpinned by curricula offered to students. This perspective led me to, finally, consider what might be the implications of varying kinds of presence by each position, and so the overall effect of "co-presence" in positional identities on the approval process. For example, the impact on a course approval mainly involving staff who adopted the position of Enabling Strategist; or alternatively, one in which Professional Guardians are less prominent than that of Governance Trustees. In essence to emplot different patterns of co-presence in the approval process. The next section explores possible scenarios for course approval.

Section 4: The implications of co-presence on course approval

The aim of this study has been to understand the experience of course approval practices and to gain a clearer insight into the influences affecting this process, particularly from the perspective of pre-registration allied health courses. In particular, as an offshoot from my initial interest in this area, I was encouraged by the potential a narrative approach held for illuminating alternative understandings about the approval process, from the public version everyone saw. In particular, the effects created by the presence of different positions and how these may alter the overall mix of the crowd, or co-presence of those involved within approval. The notion of co-presence is understood here as the impression created by different positional patterns, which may occur in an approval process. For instance, the possibility that an approval event may be predominated mainly by the presence of Governance Trustees and Enabling Strategists and not those of the Boundary Broker and Professional Guardian.

Deliberations on the official plot of the approval process

If the official narratives of course approval events are the only ones followed, as portrayed by some participants' in this study, it would be plausible to conceive that the action of course approval is nothing more than a perfunctory experience. In other words, a prescribed or 'given' sequence of activities that must be completed

in order for a course team to receive a judgment, on whether a proposed course can be provided to students, or a specified market of potential customers. Though arriving at a decision is an important characteristic of the process, it is not the only one. Since preparations prior to the event, call for liminal places in which staff can engage in collective sense-making about the futures of professional and educational practice and how these visions might be fulfilled within a course proposal. This assertion is supported by Harvey's claim that to understand staff experiences of external monitoring events requires an holistic view, which places the process in the wider environment of HE as a public good (Harvey, 2004). Moving beyond surface interpretations will enable the means used to underpin processes, such as approval and accreditation, to be considered more openly and critically.

The concern raised following this research is that the nature of professional education is altering to align itself predominantly with external reference points, for instance, linked to practice demands, an environment that is risk averse and resource limited. As a result, there seems to be little or no scope within the space(s) of course approval for interruption, through critical speculation or for the art of curriculum review. As a consequence the narrative script of the approval process amongst course teams gets changed, because staff no longer experience real choice. Indeed the journey of approval seems at risk of becoming institutionalised; through objectifying the process this approach makes it harder for staff to be co-producers of their own course proposals. The potential is not only, as highlighted by Mann (2001), that students become alienated by the experience of HE but, also, I would propose, so might staff, by their experience of approving the degree courses in which they live. Therefore, it might be useful to rethink how course approval is understood. Perhaps the overall will that has become so great to ensure things are right for service users is prompting us to set-up processes that emphasise the maintenance of the process, more than the purpose of it. In Sennett's opinion an obsession with process can lead to demise

> The craftsman's desire for quality poses a motivational danger: the obsession with getting things perfectly right may deform the work itself. We are more likely to fail as craftsmen, I argue, due to our inability to organise obsession than because of our lack of ability

(Sennett, 2008:11)

The purpose of this final section is to secure a further understanding of the impact of external monitoring processes used in HE, such as course approval. The first two sections of this chapter offered a theoretical exploration of how course approval might be influenced. Firstly, the theoretical lens of Bernstein (2000) alongside, Barnett and Coate (2005) provided the basis from which the Facets of Experience were organised i.e. Frame Perspectives, Patterns of Action and Interactions. Secondly, the practice of approval was combined with theory in an exploratory conceptual map of positional identity. The conceptual map showed ways in which the experience of those involved was tempered by the dynamics of power and control. Finally, the discussion moves to speculate on different ways in which the approval process might be understood linked to different degrees of co-presence of those involved.

Positional identities as a series of emplotments

When reflecting on the conceptual map if both the situational layer and impact layer are considered together (Figure 9.2), this view of the approval landscape encouraged different views on possibilities for emplotment of the approval journey. As an occupational therapist my own interest of using stories to help patients share how they understood their situation and possible futures has been a powerful tool. The critical role of narrative in helping clinical teams to strategise about how to turn the implementation of projects in more desirable directions has been documented (Mattingly, 1998).

In this research, encouraging participants to share their stories has already been used to discern the sense staff made of the approval process. Similarly, here, the use of narrative scenarios is intended to envision 'further' emergent stories of approval and the implications of these. Consequences linked with the presence of different positions, and how the collective co-presence of these may change the balance of the approval process was of particular interest. Varying patterns of co-presence are underpinned by the sway and blend of power (classification) and control (framing) underlying each position. In order to broaden current

understandings of the approval process and support an appreciation of the potential effects of co-presence on course approval, including the nature of courses being approved, four scenarios are presented next, and their implications discussed.

Scenarios to manage uncertainty

I believe there is a lack of 'futures thinking' connected to approaches used to approve allied health courses and also, in general, the ways in which the quality of these courses are monitored by evaluative agencies. The concern is that if approval methodologies currently employed, lead staff to deal with these circumstances by adopting positional identities in the process, then what are the implications of these identities and more, if one or more should prevail over the others?

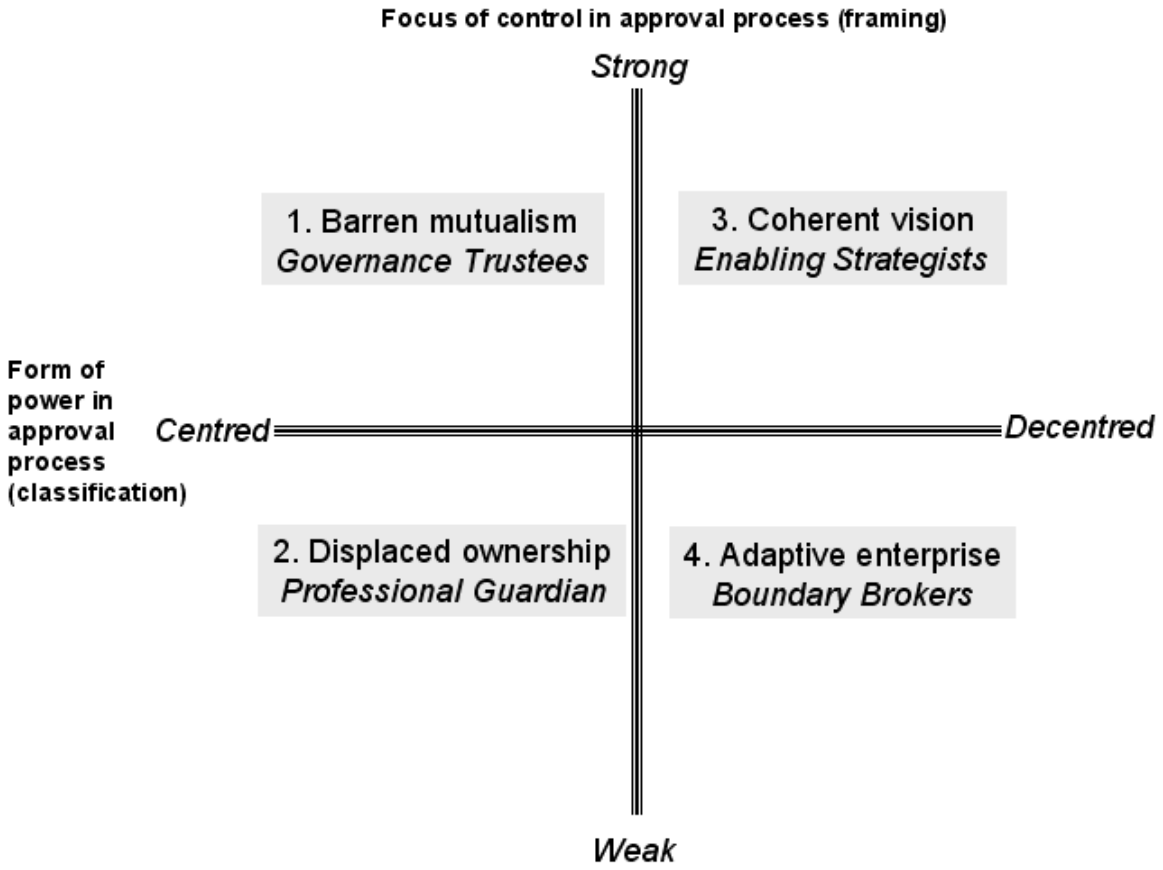
Rather than using technical approaches to identify and measure trends, I used scenarios as a means to emplot potential futures. The approach used here focused on narratives rather than technicised, context-free recipes in management textbooks. Following this path provided the means to review presumptions used by decision makers and promote the study of 'collective ignorance' (Schoemaker, 1995:38). Indeed, as Snoek (2003) claims, scenario planning is not used as a tool to present a definitive view of the future, but more lead to better thinking and reflection on current issues in order to promote an ongoing 'strategic conversation' about futures. The use of scenarios resonated with the critical, social constructionist theoretical framework guiding this study; since story sharing supports sense-making of the approval process within a wider socio-political context. In addition, those involved through their understandings and action may be enabled to influence what educational futures are created.

Examples of scenarios for the course approval process

This part of the chapter details some exemplar scenarios connected to the course approval process informed by an approach taken by Snoek et al. (2003) linked to the generation of future scenarios of teacher education in Europe. The scenarios are centred on a two-dimensional matrix, where the axes represent the dynamic forces influenced by Bernstein's theories (2000), which substantiated the

construction of positional identities. Through combining the attributes of power as centred and decentred, alongside forms of control in the approval process, four scenarios emerged as presented in Figure 9.8.

Figure 9.8 Modelling scenarios of course approval



The scenarios illustrated in Figure 9.8. focused on the extremes for each of the dimensions of power (classification) and control (framing) (Bernstein, 2000). To further assist in enabling each of the scenarios to be comparable, the following questions informed each one:

- What are the characteristics of those who dominate the scenario and the possible effects on the Facets of Experience of others involved around them?
- As a consequence, how is the process of approval approached and organised?
- What impact does the scenario have on professional degree courses, curriculum and academic staff?

Each of the four scenarios are presented next. All are identified by a descriptive title, alongside, those positional identities, which dominated that particular scenario. Two scenarios are presented discursively and two portrayed as narrative vignettes.

Scenario 1: Barren mutualism (strong control /centred power)

The principles associated with a scenario of Barren Mutualism are:

- Compliance
- Standardisation
- Quality by exception
- Formality
- Hollow community

Characteristics of those who dominate the scenario

Within these circumstances, the positional identity of the Governance Trustee presided over others. The focus of control within the process is strong, reflected in the formality of the Governance Trustee's interactions with others. Governance Trustees hold a central concern for maintaining and assuring the compliance of staff. Meeting the demands of regulatory principles and external monitoring agencies is the underwritten imperative linked to this scenario. Change outside agreed tolerances is not welcome since to amend and diversify from the standards set by evaluative agencies, or the institution, may result in the position of strong framing, as the 'transmitter' of governance systems being compromised. Overall, the scenario exemplified a bounded worldview, an inclination for preferred routines and a dislike of ambiguity.

Characteristics of the approval process

Little choice is available to those who participated in preparing courses within a scenario of Barren Mutualism. In these conditions the strength of proposals submitted by course teams for internal scrutiny are judged by the degree of alignment with the organisation's procedures, and compliance with requirements of standardised presentation. Exceptions are not easily tolerated and as a result, expectations of staff are given and fixed. For example, the number of characters permissible within the title of a module descriptor was limited.

The dialogue of Governance Trustees' with others is typified by what Bernstein (2000:157) terms vertical discourse, which takes the form of 'explicit, systematically principled structure, hierarchically organised' (2000:157). Due to the over emphasis on procedures, relationships are on a 'request for information' basis rather than on one characterised by proactive exchanges. Events are extremely efficient and well ordered. Time afforded to free-flowing discussion amongst course teams and approval panel members is restricted. Within the scenario demarcations are also maintained in the physical arrangements for approval events, they commonly resembled an interview scenario with the approval panel and course team members sitting oppositional to one another.

Impact on professional degree courses and educators

In this scenario the potential 'reservoir' of course teams, in other words the total set of strategies used by the academic community (Bernstein, 2000:158), within the approval process the presentation of creative ideas, is threatened and, in some cases, closed down in favour of risk averse curriculum. As a result, learning is contained within module descriptors, which identify learning outcomes and represent the institution's contract with students. The aim is to make learning intentions transparent. The risk of this scenario, then, is that the meaning of professional education becomes static and equated to a process that can be predicted and tied down to measurable effects. Linked to course futures in 'Barren Mutualism' there exist few sources of innovation. The links between practice and education do not genuinely exist except when invited by the institution.

Consequently, professional practice and education exist as two different worlds. The effect on pre-registration and post-graduate students is that they are ill equipped to move within, and between either.

Scenario 2: Displaced ownership (weak control /centred power)

The scenario 'Displaced ownership' suggested that the positional identity of the Professional Guardian was most common. The scenario of Displaced Ownership is presented in opposition to the scenario of Barren Mutualism within the following vignette.

At Hopeage University, staff working in the AHP programmes of Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy had completed preparations for the approval of their profession specific degree courses. The major approval event was due to take place. These two groups had combined for the panel meeting itself. Each team had agreed to adopt this conjoint strategy, in the belief presentation as a group of academics would enable them to feel less intimidated by the authoritative, formal approach expected from the Approval Panel presiding over the process.

The respective curriculum for each discipline reflected a specialist, professional frame of reference, supported by a strong evidence base and substantiated by the breadth of research staff had engaged in. The impact on curriculum was that there was a consistent supply of innovative ideas related to developments in practice and approaches to teaching and learning. Combined with a focus on the needs of service users, the imperative was to safeguard these professional borders. Typically, Professional Guardians believed professional borders were clear, straightforward, and perpetuated by a consistent concern for content in curricula, alongside students being socialised into the profession in certain ways.

Due to all these highly charged principles, reaching the point of course documentation being ready, and a team prepared for the approval event was a challenge. These circumstances meant that the prospect of co-ordination to meet agreed timescales, coherent presentation of documentation for the panel and acknowledgement of due process was difficult. For the few registry staff whose

role it was to co-ordinate an event within a scenario where Professional Guardians dominated, their task was exacting. In these circumstances any attempts at proceduralisation through the observation of preferred formats, mapping learning outcomes to required standards, was given a low priority by staff. These circumstances promoted an uneasy and often conflictual relationship between the two groups. Yet conflict was not unusual amongst Professional Guardians. Since such groups were dominated by knowledgeable characters, who believed they not only "owned" professional knowledge, but also parts of the curriculum. Whilst staff were passionate about their subject, this level of ownership was troublesome. Attempts, therefore, as part of curriculum review to make changes and rethink professional education were difficult. Additionally, this group lacked the strategic leadership that would provide the needed knowledge and acumen to navigate the demands and style of evaluative agencies. In addition, without a focal point, the capacity to create solutions to shared problems was difficult and also placed the currency of the course in jeopardy, since several resisted change.

The approval event itself was also tenuous. Since whilst Professional Guardians were the larger group they were still required to secure a decision from an approval panel. This situation did not reflect a meeting of minds, rather a collection of conflicting values. In this setting reasoned debate about the principles on which curriculum and, therefore, of the proposed course received minor interest in the process. Instead, the priority given by Approval Panel members to procedures, and the exacting application of certain terms, meant that such teams risked coming unstuck in their accomplishment of approval. From such circumstances, emerged the potential for a list of conditions, which must be met before any course was approved. It also signified that professional ownership of the course, by those who adopted the position of Professional Guardian, ran the risk of displacement due to 'new' authorities in the system, founded on forms of accountability affected by regulatory reform with which they were unaccustomed.

Scenario 3: Coherent vision (strong control /decentred power)

The principles associated with a scenario of 'coherent vision' are:

- pragmatism
- smooth operations
- interest games

Characteristics of those who dominate the scenario

Unlike other positions who may have perceived that the approval process posed no problem, a position prepared for a struggle, was that of the Enabling Strategist. Their positional imprint suggested a stance of hybridism. In other words, an identity forged to secure a balance between all of the Influencing Dynamics that informed what the social practice of approving a course involved.

The consequence of the Enabling Strategist predominating at an approval event is that course proposals were placed in safe hands; those adopting the positional identity brought to the scenario their substantive experience of working within hierarchical institutions. Furthermore, their length of service and subject expertise, accrued from their extensive networks across HE, enabled them to be politically perceptive. As a result, the officious demands of regulatory practice are managed and any potential maverick actions by course team members dealt with effectively, but pleasantly.

However, the nature of high level, visible accountabilities of the Enabling Strategist could also result in the presence of such staff, consciously or not, restricting curriculum review activities. Affiliations to the organisation that employed them were hugely significant. Indeed, because this identity had the ability to translate the required dialogue of 'approval-speak' and those around them acknowledged this as their modus operandi, they were expected to follow requirements. Consequently, the balanced positional imprint of the Enabling Strategist might be deceptive. Though the Enabling Strategist portrayed a resourceful identity, this

capacity emerged through negating their other identities, and those of others, such as Professional Guardians, in favour of following the prescribed rubric.

Characteristics of the approval process

At events where Enabling Strategists are more common, success of approval events is highly likely. The resourceful attributes of these positional identities are comfortable in managing the dialogue of approval and in presenting this back to approval panels in the required form. Connected with decentred power, networking across professional areas and HE was used to good effect. From this exposure, Enabling Strategists were able to gather insider intelligence about the approaches commonly taken by approval panels, which they passed on to their own course teams. In addition, because they also knew several reviewers a mutual respect between colleagues was emphasised.

A course approval process resembling a 'coherent scenario' also resulted in any opportunities for unpredictability to be monitored and, when necessary, eradicated. Subsequently, course team members are carefully picked such that the atmosphere reflected one of smoothness. Staff who might be impassioned about their subject might not be included, which meant that those working alongside Enabling Strategists may feel overly controlled, or believe their ideas were disregarded.

Impact on professional degree courses and educators

Whilst the 'coherent scenario' may commonly reflect that a good result is achieved, the risk is that due to the level of managed activity, professional courses can still become overly led by the requirements of evaluative agencies. This is likely because in a scenario in which Enabling Strategists take the lead or are in a majority, such staff are as equally interested in safeguarding their own credibility and that of the organisation, as they are representing a subject degree programme with a strong professional locus. In addition, the concentration towards a task orientation can mean authentic opportunities to review curriculum that do not support strategic action may be limited; limited both in the sense of promoting

creative ideas, as well as the physical time given to such activities. Tendencies towards supporting 'orderliness' are also reflected in the lack of objection towards the use of module descriptors, or the organisation of curriculum content into specified credit structures. Due to this mindset, any challenges connected to envisioning professional futures and how these may be addressed by curriculum change and pedagogic innovation will doubtfully be entertained.

Scenario 4: Adaptive Enterprise (weak control /decentred power)

In this scenario, the presence of the Boundary Broker is most common in course approval. Again, a narrative vignette is used to bring this particular set of circumstances to life.

At last, the day of the course approval event had arrived. Staff within the Department Team had taken clear responsibility for the realisation and fulfilment of presenting a course for approval today. In this team, the Boundary Brokers predominated. The characteristics of the Boundary Broker were such that the idea of common goals for a common good had pervaded preparations. Such a stance had created some wrangles with others, whose preference was to railroad proposals through. Though Boundary Brokers gently persisted, backed up by both their superior subject knowledge, and exposure to governance processes from working as a specialist in other organisations. Such a stance was difficult to argue against. In addition, their particular approach within preparations promoted unique ideas, but not individualised pathways. As such, other academic staff became agreeable, since this attitude favoured consensus and was built on openness. For example, through clearly explaining the Influence of Routines which affected the presentation of proposals. It seemed Boundary Brokers' were adept at satisfying the external demands of stakeholders and addressing the internal values of academic and practice staff.

Boundary Brokers favoured course proposals that demonstrated pedagogy that had not become segmented. This standpoint was informed by a reservoir of strategies (Bernstein, 2000) supported by dialogue across different groups. This form of

interaction still allowed for specialised knowledge to be developed, but did not dissuade flexibility in course structures, such that teaching and learning was offered in discrete packages. Consequently, professional education in these courses placed an equal emphasis on the development of critical capacities and self as a therapist, as on the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills.

The above balancing act was not easy to achieve. Though one of the key attributes of the Boundary Broker was the critical lens this position possessed for recognising that the approval process was constructed by a variety of stakeholders. As a result, what emerged from several iterations of the process, led them to believe that securing approval was more about mindfulness towards different interests than being overly concerned with procedural issues. Indeed, attention to detail could sometimes cause them to become unstuck, however, as a consequence of their abilities to get on with staff from whatever sector meant others usually offered this kind of assistance.

Consequently, an approval event at which Boundary Brokers were common, was one characterised by the stakeholders involved having the opportunity to interact in the event and address their agenda. Occasionally this inclination by Boundary Brokers for pursuing the common interest was vulnerable to individual panel members who sought to gain priority for their particular issue. However, such was the regard by approval panel members', by those who adopted this position, possibly because they had worked with them outside these contexts, such exceptions were normally closed down.. As such, the outcome of an approval scenario in which Boundary Brokers abound was that the process not only achieved the desired outcome, but also encouraged course team members to believe they had been able to contribute to a successful project, as well as learn from it themselves.

Summary

The discussion and examination of narratives, which emerged from this research into the experiences of staff involved in course approval, has revealed the nature of the process as two-fold. Firstly, that the journey of approval is complex, an experience that is commonly over simplified due to the façade created by the procedural nature of the process. Secondly, the study has also shown, informed by the work of Barnett and Coate (2005), that in order to deal with the demands of approval those involved adopted a positional identity in the journey. Taking a position was linked to narrative repertoires that reflected particular ways of understanding, acting and relating to others. Within this study, positions were illustrated as the Boundary Broker, Professional Guardian, Enabling Strategist and Governance Trustee. Each of these positions were presented and analysed in depth within Chapters Five to Eight.

Whilst I believed, against the background of current literature, that the initial findings from the research illuminating the landscape of course approval were novel, subsequently I realised this presentation still provided a limited version of how things were. My reading of Bernstein's theories (2000), particularly on classification and framing alongside his subsequent theory of pedagogic identity, helped to develop an exploratory map of positional identity within approval events. From this map, positional imprints were illustrated for each of the four positions. The exploratory map along with each of the positional imprints supported speculation not just about the adoption of positional identities but, also, how the nature of co-presence affected the process.

A fundamental message arising from these scenarios was that whilst pedagogic practice may still be viewed as negotiable, the current practices influenced by new managerialist approaches might stand to limit or frame dialogue about professional futures and, as part of this, the nature of curriculum. As a consequence, such scenarios show that participation by staff now reflect significant alterations in what it means to be involved in the process. In essence, staff not only have to deal with

the performative requirements of professional and statutory bodies, but also the tensions that exist around understandings of the event between those involved. For course teams, such as those from allied health, this can lead towards professional identities becoming service orientated, rather than futures being deliberated with those who are impacted on by the outcome, such as students, service users and members of the profession. Such a stance casts doubt over the authenticity of current approval processes. Since in circumstances where reliance is placed on metrics, rather than on spaces in which course teams are required in professional and pedagogic terms to justify their proposals, there is doubt about what is being assured; the systems in place to deliver a course, or the quality of the educative proposal on which it lies. The caveat to this view is that educational futures will always be driven by government policy; it is, therefore, the responsibility of staff, themselves, to participate actively in the change that the approval journey offers, by reconsidering the positional identities they adopt in order to better manage these relations.

CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis sets a challenge to all staff connected with the project of course approval, and that is if staff are to maintain their ownership of what is being approved, then reconsideration of how the approval process is conceptualised and enacted by those involved is warranted. This chapter supports the beginnings of this task, firstly, by presenting prompts for reflection based on the contributions and implications that emerged from this study. Secondly, recommendations or guideposts to support practitioners and educators linked with profession-specific degree courses are offered. Finally, potential areas for further research as a result of this study are suggested.

This thesis has revealed that the narrative of course approval stories from staff connected to pre-registration AHP courses have received little attention in the literature. From this research, it is evident that the approval journey is complex, constituted by a range of different stakeholders all of whom held varying agendas. To cope with these challenging circumstances, alongside the procedurally saturated nature of the approval process, those involved in this study appeared to adopt different positional identities. Apart from addressing the research questions identified at the start of the study (which involved examination of the experiences of staff in course approval and the influences on this process), this research also considered implications of these practices on educational futures. The significance of this development was supported conceptually by the influence of Bernstein's theory of pedagogic identity (Bernstein, 2000). Within this study, Bernstein's model has been extended to expose the influences of managerial and performative practices on forms of external monitoring, such as course approval, and to advance how the approval process within HE may be enacted and conceptualised in the future.

It would be plausible to believe within the intensely managed environment of higher education that the narrative of approval was similar to the scenario given at the start of this thesis. A scenario in which it was assumed that staff had no choice

but to become acculturated by managerialist practices linked to the culture of external monitoring procedures. Yet, this study has shown that involvement within the approval of a professional degree course does not necessarily mean that this practice needs to become reified. Whilst the narrative trajectories from this study portrayed course approval as a medley of formalised rituals, this research also presented, in many instances, where these routines were negotiated successfully by participants. A successful scenario was one in which staff were prepared to reconcile hitting the targets, now an irrevocable part of the process, with grasping the point of the creative opportunity which the approval of a course provides.

The contributions of this study

This thesis has examined the experiences of staff who had participated in the approval process of profession-specific degree programmes. The research has provided a glimpse into an area of practice, which currently has received minimal attention. One explanation for this situation may be that the process of approval is considered as a taken for granted activity, a rite of passage which must be accepted by those involved. Consequently, the need to discuss the process is understood as unnecessary. Though some researchers have raised concerns about the changing nature of course approval, for instance Gerbic and Kranenberg (2003), few questions have been raised as to how policy reform affecting the approval of health profession degrees, influences the practice of those involved or the nature of courses emerging from it. A further issue connected to the lack of attention in this area of practice is that the quality assurance literature in higher education has largely focussed on complications connected with the procedural approach taken, rather than exploring ways staff dealt with the demands of the approval process.

This study contributes first to existing literature because it presents a close-up comprehensive inquiry into the experience of the approval process in pre-registration AHP courses, than offered presently by any other published UK study. To date, few questions have been raised and addressed as to how regulatory reform has altered the practice of educators in course approval preparations and events,

and the nature of courses emerging from it. The research presented here aims to address that gap.

Secondly, the study is also of value because it has revealed the culture of course approval. In particular, the effects of new managerialist practices on an aspect of practice that is generally considered as settled. Connected to these issues, what is of importance is that these findings encourage staff to acknowledge course approval as a micropolitical activity. Moreover, aspects of power and control linked to the various stakeholders involved, and how these operated in the approval arena were identified through stories shared by participants. Such insights may enable other staff to prepare for similar situations.

The third contribution is linked to working with a narrative approach. The adoption of a social constructionist perspective, as Rogers (2007:102) argued, allowed for 'an examination not only for the participant's social experience but also of multiple truths and shifting identity positions'. The notion of 'positional identity' emerged as a central concept. From this research, the performances of staff within the approval process were identified as four positional identities: the Governance Trustee, Professional Guardian, Enabling Strategist and Boundary Broker. Considering how staff may present them 'selves' it is likely that the positional identities adopted by staff here, may have resonance for academics across the sector. These illustrations may enable staff to speculate on the consequences of how they positioned themselves to inform future practice, as a result of these constructions.

The fourth contribution of this research is a new empirical testing of Bernstein's work on pedagogic identities (Bernstein, 2000). Not only was a conceptual map of positional identity presented and used as a 'thinking tool', it was also possible to model and emplot the implications of different patterns in the 'co-presence' of positional identities. By speculating on different arrangements of positional identities and their implications on the approval process, this study has made an original contribution by addressing a gap in what is currently known about this aspect of quality management in higher education. This perspective may also be

used in the future to reconsider the ways staff manage the demands of external monitoring in other areas of the public sector and the implications of these behaviours on the nature of what is being approved.

The fifth contribution of this study is that it challenges previous research connected with the experiences of staff participating within external monitoring activities, alongside quality monitoring processes generally in higher education. This study suggested that rather than the place of staff within these processes being regarded as having become subsumed by the process, for example Shore and Wright (2000), Strathern (2000) and Newton (2002), instead staff here exercised choices in the ways they negotiated the demands of the process.

Sixth, and finally, this inquiry illuminated the tension between the potential creative activities linked with course review and the performative aspects of course approval. Revealing such tensions may assist in levering a mutual process of co-production between academics and the staff responsible for the successful enactment of the approval process. The creative stage of curriculum review is integral to ensure that course proposals remain current and responsive to enable graduates to deal with the individual and complex needs of service users encountered in various future practice scenarios. Equally important is the attention spent on ensuring that required documentation and presentation of a course for (re)approval is successfully led and co-ordinated in order to avert unnecessary problems with procedures. This study has shown that both of these aspects can, and need to, be understood as important parts of the overall approval journey. Comprehending and allowing for these differences may enable participants to accommodate the co-presence of all stakeholders involved.

Key messages: Implications and recommendations arising from the study

In an attempt to follow a narrative approach in this research, I aimed not for generalisability, since there can be ‘no canon’ in narrative work (Reissman, 2008:186). As a result, it would be inappropriate here to provide a cookbook list of recommendations. Rather, a series ‘key messages’ are presented for those who

seek to be reflective about the nature of approval events in the context of local circumstances.

If staff are to maintain ownership of professional curriculum they need to become more proactive by taking up the opportunities course approval brings. This shift necessitates that the process is not assumed to be unproblematic. It also requires those involved to reconsider their present and possible positional identities in the process. The positional identities emerging from this study represented different ways of thinking, acting and relating to others; these aspects can encourage or discourage the presence of disciplinary voices. Examples of these may act as guideposts for others, and identified here in the following key messages:-

- *A higher (and different) priority needs to be placed on the course approval process.*
  At present the opportunities course approval provides to reconsider and refresh courses, are being closed down by understanding it as an obligatory process. Consequently, it would be deceptively easy to acquiesce to the demands of the process. Instead, a re-emphasis must be given to ensuring that course documents reflect educational proposals, which evidence how a diverse range of students will be engaged and retained within a learning partnership. Related to this study rather than occupying the fixed space in which the approval event takes place, staff need to be encouraged to form their own agora (Barnett and Coate, 2005). Such action will provide opportunities for course teams to develop their proposals through participatory dialogue that encourages the process of approval to be connected with its the purpose, one that is nonetheless challenging but open.

- *Spaces for debate about curriculum developments have been all but extinguished by the procedural approach inherent in the process.*
  Instances where scholarly debate was taken outside of the prescriptive containment imposed by the approval process, meant more time was afforded to review courses in an inclusive way, not just from the perspective

of staff, but also that of students and service users. Adopting this stance may enable the purpose or ends of professional curriculum, to educate future practitioners to treat the diverse and complex needs of patients, remains connected to the means or process of approval.

- *What counts as a successful course proposal is changing.*
  Currently a successful submission is reflected in course learning outcomes having been mapped and evidenced against the standards required of evaluative agencies. This prescriptive approach appears to have been largely driven by risk averse practice. However, staff must continue to remind themselves of the fact that practice is not risk free. The reality of clinical environments is such that they continue to be unpredictable, complex and challenging; indeed this is evidenced, unfortunately, by the continuation of national inquiries in health and social care services. Staff need to be mindful that curriculum need to achieve a balance in developing critical, reflective and inquiring capabilities, alongside evidence based technical competencies for practice.

- *Greater efforts need to be made to maximise the benefits of inter-departmental working when making preparations for course approval.*
  The establishment of a peer review panel, composed of academics from disciplines familiar with the requirements of PSRBs would be useful. Due to the streamlining of internal monitoring processes, such practices across courses have commonly been withdrawn. Instigating a review of this nature would serve a dual purpose. Firstly, to ensure prescriptive benchmarks are triangulated by reasoned evidence from the course team. Secondly, such a panel may encourage a parallel conversation in which regulatory frameworks are put to one side, in favour of a more authentic defence by staff who will implement the course. Such an opportunity would provide space for course teams to justify how courses have been prepared, both professionally and pedagogically, to meet curriculum futures.

- *The expectations of approval including the scope and nature of the process need to be made clear to staff in advance.*
  Staff are commonly unclear about what will be expected of them, unless they have had prior experience of the approval process. Indeed even if staff have experienced several iterations, it would be prudent to affirm expectations due to the changeable nature of statutory policy. Being informed in advance may allow the process to seem more manageable. One practical way of clarifying expectations would be to establish a short-life project board with delegated accountability to oversee approval. Emerging from which, an agreed communication strategy would inform course teams about the remit and scope of the approval process. In addition, this forum could also act as a central repository for all documentation and co-ordination of arrangements. Such an arrangement would ensure that all stakeholders would have clarity about what they were being asked to do and by when.

- *Staff need to understand the differences in focus of each stakeholder involved in the approval process, if misunderstandings are not to occur.*
  Whilst most staff expected that their professional and regulatory body would participate, what was unanticipated and misunderstood was the role of commissioners who placed contracts with universities for the provision of the AHP courses in this study. The agenda of purchasers' is based on a different set of interests and influence from that of, for example, Professional Bodies. Professional body representatives are concerned with furthering the identity of the profession and its curricula, unlike commissioners who are focussed on securing both value for money and serving the priorities of their catchment areas through access to particular kinds of practitioners. If those representing course proposals at either approval events or contract review meetings are clear about differences in stakeholder influence and interests, then, success becomes more likely. Staff can prepare themselves by becoming informed about the terms of reference used by commissioners, and as a result, they will be more prepared to address the priorities that are important to them, whilst objectively highlighting professional issues.

- *Academic leadership in the process of course approval is pivotal to success.* A final message emerging from this study was the value of experienced academic leadership. Where this worked well these duties had already been considered and purposefully delegated. Leading a course through an approval process is not one that should be undertaken by default. The five-year term of course review is an extensive period of time in which to bear ill-conceived decisions. Consistent leadership, particularly in relation to agreeing proposals for a new or revised course may overwhelmingly influence enactment of curriculum and the overall culture within a department. Indeed a poorly led and co-ordinated event may evoke subsequent resistance from staff when the course is offered later. Given these vulnerabilities, it cannot be assumed that those in such roles know what to do because policy and processes change so frequently. Therefore, strategically planned staff development activities and the possibilities for succession planning would enhance preparations for external monitoring events. Where there can be no choice in appointing an inexperienced lead for a course's approval, it is essential that such staff are afforded at least mentorship and encouraged to utilise "critical friend" relationships with PBs.

Additional areas for further research

This study has presented research about an area of practice connected to the experiences of staff within the process of pre-registration AHP course approval, which until recently has received little attention. Taking account of the lack of empirical studies and the emergent and exploratory nature of this inquiry, four additional areas for further research are suggested.

1. Emerging from this study, what has been brought into question is whether, as a consequence of the sanitised approach currently adopted in the approval of courses, critical dialogues involving authentic appraisal of curriculum still occur, or have dwindled due to imperatives of the process and the impact of performative policies on HE. A future research interest would be a multi-site case study to explore and identify where and how

review of curriculum in AHP courses takes place, alongside the implications of this from the perspective of several stakeholders. This inquiry would provide an insight into how the kinds of reference points, such as those of statutory regulatory bodies, used to guide health profession degree courses, vastly shape course proposals or not. This initial proposal for further research may be usefully extended to include other subject areas that are also required to gain approval from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, such as, law, medicine and engineering.

2. A further possible research area would be connected to the involvement of stakeholders, particularly those directly impacted by the outcome, for example, the participation of students and service users of health and social care services. Whilst research has been undertaken into the involvement of students in curriculum review, for example Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten (2011), few questions have been raised about the involvement of service users. This absence of user involvement is understood as particularly troublesome, given that the ultimate outcome of pre-registration education, is the capacity of graduates from such courses, to provide effective treatment and care to service users. From this study, several participants based on their experiences of course approval, identified the rarity of a substantive partnership with service users as part of the self-evaluation process, or at the approval event itself. Consequently, a proposal for further research connected to user involvement would be a participatory action research study to explore and develop ways service users may contribute to curriculum review and course approval processes. The study would also focus on identifying how service users might be best prepared to participate, and to evaluate the impact their involvement has had on the shape of course proposals. Such knowledge may assist course teams to involve service users as partners in the process, and to evidence that the approval of a course was user focussed, rather than service led.

3. Another suggestion for further research is that a broader inquiry could be undertaken to ascertain the contextual factors that inhibit or promote the development of course proposals submitted for approval. In particular, a comparative study involving pre and post 1992 HEIs could expose a range of perspectives. The findings from this proposed study may also assist in the enhancement of staff development activities through the identification and dissemination of different kinds of support provided to course teams. For example, ways that staff have been able to navigate the requirements of approval, whilst also advancing innovative approaches to curriculum development.

4. Based on Bernsteinian theory (Bernstein, 2000) research now needs to be carried out to understand how the concept of positional identity within the existing performative practices of course approval may have transferability elsewhere. Such work may have particular significance for other subject areas, which in order to gain approval of a course need to comply with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' requirements.

Summary

This study has sought to explore the experiences of those involved in the approval of profession-specific degree courses, and to make visible the ways staff dealt with the process. Emerging from the findings of this research, it seemed that in order to cope, those involved adopted a position or positional identity. Four positional identities were identified, namely: the Governance Trustee, Professional Guardian, Enabling Strategist and Boundary Broker. The presentation of course approval as an arena in which positional identities are enacted, appeared to be unique. However, I believed this standpoint did not necessarily move the debate forward. For instance, linked to the possibilities for different combinations of positional identities and the implications of these. From my own perspective, though the initial findings provided a deeper understanding about the demands of the process, there were times when I believed nothing could significantly change from the scenario I had portrayed at the start of this thesis.

However, based on the initial interpretative framework, Facets of Experience, and informed by the theories of Bernstein (2000) with Barnett and Coate (2005), a conceptual exploratory map of positional identity was subsequently developed. The conceptual map provided a framework with which to rethink the impact of positional identities on approval. Later on, based on the use of the map and review of four positional imprints that emerged from it, a series of emplotments were realised. These different scenarios provided the means with which to recognise and raise questions about the implications of the approval process. Consequently, it is anticipated that this research has served to do more than explore the experiences of staff linked to the approval of pre-registration AHP courses. Additionally, I believe this study will also prompt critical debate about the purpose of a taken for granted process occurring across HE, which has the potential to influence professional futures.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Actors	Actors are individuals who have a part within activities leading to, and within course approval events. Within this study participants are also referred to actors.
Adaptation	Adaptation is understood as the means to adjust or transform current ways of doing things. The capacity for adaptation reflects the ability to cope with demands of approval, particularly connected to situations in which uncertainty arises
Approval space	Approval spaces are settings in which different kinds of actions and interaction involved within the social practices of course approval take place
Arena	Refers to the space(s) in which preparations for, and the course approval event itself takes place. The arena is occupied by different historical, political and cultural practices. These present possibilities for the chain of relations between actors to be connective or disrupted
Aspects of a position	Particular qualities or characteristics either demonstrated or portrayed within narrative(s). Together the 'aspects' of a position constitute the overall 'signature of a positional identity'

Appendix 1: Glossary of terms

Allied health professional (AHP)	Allied health professionals constitute a group of health professionals including Dieticians, Occupational Therapists, and Physiotherapists. To practice students need to have successfully completed an approved pre-registration degree programme, which enables eligibility to apply for registration with the Health Professions Council, for instance, as a registered Occupational Therapist
Boundaries	Boundaries are imposed limits on ways of knowing how the environment of approval is, or the worldview of a position. The domains of patterns of action and interactions may also be restrained by this influence. Each position portrayed and, therefore, handled boundaries in different ways. Boundaries are demonstrated in action by Routines
Course approval event	Is an occasion within the lifecycle of a pre-registration AHP course and informs the decision to approve/accredit/recognise a course. This judgement normally involves the review of course documents, meetings with course team members and a review of facilities in which the course will be offered, including practice education placement sites.
Facets of Experience	A set of anchor points portraying the enacting of mediated choice(s) in course approval preparations and events. This study identifies and presents three domains of choice understood as ‘Frame perspectives’, ‘Patterns of action’ and ‘Relations’.

Appendix 1: Glossary of terms

Frame perspective	The Frame Perspectives Facet represented the worldview of how participants understood the course approval journey. In essence, a frame perspective was demonstrated by particular descriptions participants' shared of how they understood the approval process and significant events occurring in it.
Hybridity	Hybridity was made clear by participants themselves, through explaining their beliefs and contrasting these with how they actually believed they needed to deal with a situation.
Institution	Institutions are organisations, such as Universities or Professional Bodies, influencing the structure and conduct of course approval.
Interactions	The Interactions Facet reflected the different inter-relationships between individuals and agencies in the approval arena.
Navigation	Navigation represents the scope and means used by different positions to move around the approval space(s). This influence on a position is demonstrated by the capacity to move across different levels of approval formation i.e. at policy level or in different arena, such as that of higher education, different areas of practice.
Networks	Networks are public or privately known links participants may have with others that they may use as a resource within the approval process. Networks may be local or national, complex or sparse.

Patterns of action	The Pattern of Action Facet was portrayed by the ways action(s) within the arena of approval were organised and perceived. Differences and similarities in action are linked to particular positions. This Facet also indicated possible insights into the motivations of each position that underpinned their modus operandi.
Positional Identity	A positional identity, referred also to a position is a temporary way of being, adopted by an individual in response to a particular situation, or a series of connected events, enacted through ways of thinking about, acting within, and interacting with others. Positional identities are identities portraying particular characteristics. These characteristics are informed by 'rules' or expectations which hold influence over a specific situation.
Positional Imprint	A pictorial representation of a positional identity and its modus operandi, realised through considering the likely degrees of framing or control, and the cumulative effect of classification or power on it.
Presence of a position	The presence of a position during the process was the combination of the power (classification) of their modus operandi, and also degrees of control (framing) within the process.
Professional body (PB)	Represents a profession, for example an allied health profession such as Dietetics, both nationally and internationally. The PB sets the standards for practice, education and research alongside the code of conduct for the profession. Pre-registration AHP courses may apply for accreditation or recognition of a proposed course leading

	to a named award, for example, BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy.
The Regulator	The Regulator of pre-registration courses included within this study is the UK Health Professions Council (HPC).
Influencing Dynamics	The role of Influencing Dynamics was depicted as a kind of moderator or means of influence on each Facet
Routines	Routines are the enactment of Boundaries. Routines are forms of action that are initiated externally to an individual, or outside of a group. Their effect is usually to solicit conformity amongst others. Due to the repetitive way in which routines are enforced this influence may become taken for granted and reproduced passively by those participating within the approval process.
Signatures	Signatures are distinctive characteristics resembled in repetitive patterns of talk, literary devices or images used by participants.
Temporality	Temporality is connected to ways individuals are influenced by time, how they lived within it, and how this was connected to various spaces in the approval journey.
Translation	Translation is demonstrated by the capabilities to interact with others and reach an understanding with those of different positions and unfamiliar spaces. It may involve decoding circumstances, as well as unfamiliar terms.

APPENDIX 2

Diary entry: A metaphor of what research initially meant to me

[Diagram of London Underground removed due to copyright]

Research Diary – 27/09/07

I had to stop myself on the stairs the other day and ask how do you feel about embarking on this research journey. The key illuminating phrase for me was how I felt about the journey.

The metaphor that does not shift in my mind is the feeling that I have when I travel on the London Underground. Despite travelling on the system many times, as I arrive at the station I always have this sense of bewildered paralysis where I confirm and reconfirm the line that I should go on… I am never sure if I am choosing the right line as I look at the different colours and routes... Very soon, I feel compelled to move and become caught up in the crowd. I seem to be literally picked up and carried off, bags and all down one of the passages! (my colleagues in the group will have noticed I am vertically challenged, so this could be a real possibility). Once at the platform and waiting for the train there seem to be many people with a clear imperative of where they are going; many of them are speaking a different language, which leads to mounting levels of uncertainty for me as to the direction of travel! A train arrives and we all cram into the tiny space. The door closes and choice to exit is gone… Will the train stop at the right places? I dare not speak to anyone…what about my bags… and so on…

More recently, reading on, I connected with the article by McClintock, Ison and Armson (2003) and my vignette. In this paper, the authors argue how metaphors can provide a way to reflect on the research practice itself. Already I am gathering insight into how I have positioned myself as a potential researcher in the context of my own practice. This involves pacing and in relation to the idea(s) that I have, informally discussing these with others, to avoid an approach of 'deciding for, rather than, deciding with' (McClintock, et al. 2003:716) perhaps? May be I am also seeking a sense of affirmation of my choice? Clearly, the final decision on the focus of the study can only come from me. Through reflecting on this metaphor of the underground, also laid open assumptions about methodology and my own comfort zone in qualitative research… there are some tube lines with mixed colours (mixed methods) to explore? On a different note in those bags that I had for the journey, I may find that I 'actually' do have some tools to utilise at the various stops in the research process. At the same time, the journey will not be a solitary one but it is up to me to listen and access other people's positions… I could go on with this 'self talk'. The activity has been far more useful than I originally thought and when I recall not dissimilar to earlier work as an Occupational Therapist. The reflection that resulted has certainly moved me to reconsider, as McClintock and colleagues point up, the importance of the researcher context as well as the research context.

APPENDIX 3

Early ideas about a theoretical model to underpin the research study

(Khanna, 2009)

APPENDIX 4

Sample of the interview topic guide

Thank the participant for coming and ensure they are comfortable
Explain who I am and what I am doing – review the aims of the study – reinforce confidentiality
Check participants happy to go ahead and explain recording that can be switched off at anytime.

Topic Outlines: (*these are 'loose' outlines since the conversation will be strongly influenced by the participant's own priorities in sharing threads of their experience and views on all or some of these areas)*

1. **BACKGROUND - focussing on route into higher education**

2. **REVIEW PROCESS – Ask participants to explain when they first started to talk about reviewing the pre-registration curriculum for the approval event this year and to outline what happened next?**

Probes, if needed with a focus on how participants felt about the process including reactions (theirs and others', other participants/stakeholders involved and the influencing processes on preparation…)
When did you hear that the course was going to be re-approved?
Where did the ideas come from?
Who was involved?
What impact did preparations have on the course team?

3. **INFLUENCES ON CURRICULUM REVIEW AND CONSTRUCTION - focus on significant events in the review and re-shaping of the new course structure and curricula including decision making (who,when,how)**

Probes, if needed to encourage stories about the knowledge that is considered or prioritised as worthwhile, changes in this perspective over time based on their own reflections of their profession and involvement

4. **DESCRIPTION OF CURRICULUM – encourage participants to explain the ways in which their curriculum is structured**

Probes, if needed around the influences on how the curriculum is structured to meet any specific requirements (or rules) and participants' reflections on this

5. **COURSE APPROVAL EVENT – encourage participants to share the experiences of the course approval event, including any significant events and the roles people played.**

   Probes, if needed on participants' reactions and feelings about the process, the roles of those present (particularly in relation to ambiguities connected to role) and how views count.

6. **IMPLICATIONS – encourage participants to share their thoughts about the implications of course approval**
   Probes, if needed with a focus on thoughts about implications for course teams, students, the university both now and the future

7. **THE FUTURE - focus on participants explaining their ideas of whether the process of course approval might stay the same or be altered.**
   Probes, if needed on describing alternatives for review of curricula and approval of courses – reflect also on if other individuals or groups of people should be involved

8. **SUMMARY – Check the feelings of participants in sharing their experiences and if they would like to ask any question to end the session**

Switch off machine – make sure participants feel content about the meeting, reassure about confidentiality
Explain to the participant about the transcript being forwarded to them in the next 7-10 days for them to review.
Let participants know about how to access me if there is anything they wish to discuss or ask
Explain that I will get in contact with them in the next 2-3 weeks time to see if they wish to continue with the second meeting. Explain the purpose of the second meeting.
Thank them for their participation

APPENDIX 5

Extract from Research Proposal 'mapping' strategies for enhancing the quality of this study

Element of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, Krefting, 1991, Taylor, 2007)	**Mapping to this study**
Credibility Whether the study presents an accurate picture based on the participants experiences	• Individuals are involved as 'participants' not as objects, therefore, the intention is to avoid 'objectification' of experience and promote recipricocity • The focus is on perspectives not the recounting of facts • The work involves a range of stakeholders from different levels and professions • The study includes methods of data collection apart from interviews, such as documentary analysis, observer participant reflections and field notes • The researcher intends to utilise the process of triangulation or alternatively with reference to this narrative research, a process of crystallization (Richardson, 1994:522). The approach to data analysis is already a precursor to this.
Transferability Achievement in the 'goodness' of 'fit' with other settings	• This study evokes a sense of 'naturalistic generalisation' (Stake, 1995) from readers and listeners; who demonstrate empathy in association with this study/proposal in relation to their own experience. • The study represents the meaning and reality of the participants as they share the process of interpretation of stories as part of interview conversations.
Dependability Being clear about the process of the research	• Participants are involved within the study by a process of informed consent • Transparency of procedures is identified within the research proposal and explained in the Participant Information Sheet. This is particularly important in relation to data analysis, where an exact record of individuals experience may not be the outcome
Confirmability Linked to strategies used by the researcher to limit bias or enhance the neutrality of the data	• Use of narrative interviews allows participants to lead the agenda • It is understood that meaning is not pre-formed by the researcher but constructed through talk with participants • The researcher will uncover their own background and demonstrate how this has influenced the study through ongoing reflexivity in keeping a diary and regular communication with the project supervisors

APPENDIX 6

E-mail advertising the project

Sent: 10 July 2008 11:19
To: HLS - OT[redacted]HLS - Physio
Attachments: P)[Open as Web Page]

Dear colleagues,

The purpose of this message is to invite you to consider being a participant in my doctoral study, outlined below. I am contacting all members of academic staff within the departments of Dietetics, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy.

I am seeking volunteers who have played a part in contributing to the recent review and approval of a pre-registration course, which leads to eligibility to apply for registration with the Health Professions Council.

PURPOSE

I have become very interested in the area of educational policy and particularly how policy influences ways in which curricula are developed and courses approved within our areas of practice. The proposed study focuses on one of the most contentious, yet least researched, aspects of educational practice linked to the review and approval of pre-registration allied health professional courses. This study intends to explore the experience of stakeholders involved in allied health profession (AHP) programmes. I hope the findings will provide an insight into the implications of current practices and inform future policy and procedures in the review of curricula and course approval events.

INVOLVEMENT

If you wish to be involved, I would like to meet with you 2-3 times during the next 6 months. In conversation with me I will ask you to share your stories and experiences of curriculum review and course approval; additionally, you may also have some thoughts about how this journey might be enhanced for course teams. It should involve about 5 hours of your time. I am hoping to arrange the first round of meetings any time between July-October.

Appendix 6: E-mail advertising the project

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study has gained ethical approval from the University [redacted] Ethics Committee (as a registered post-graduate student) and also [redacted] University Ethics Committee and advice has been taken from NRES. Prior to contacting you permission for this study has also been received from the Heads of Department, in Physiotherapy & Dietetics and Occupational Therapy. You, your department and name of organisation will not be named at all. A trial study has already been successfully completed.

INTERESTED?

I attach a participant information sheet supplying some further information about the study. If you are interested in taking part please e-mail me and we can arrange to speak about the study in more detail. If you decide to go ahead I will then ask you to complete a consent form. I understand that we are now entering holiday time for most staff but hope to secure participants within the next 2-3 weeks.

I believe this will be a valuable study for all parties concerned. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Becca

Becca Khanna

-*-*-*

APPENDIX 7

[Name of institution removed]

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Plain Language Statement

Study Title:

Reduced to a tick box? An inquiry exploring the journey of curriculum review and approval in pre-registration allied health professional degree programmes

Invitation to take part in a research study

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Please also take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of this study?

Changes in policy have altered the regulation of health professionals, leading to consequences in the ways pre-registration courses are structured and approved. This study seeks to explore the experience of stakeholders involved in allied health profession (AHP) programmes. Information gained from the study will be used to inform future policy and procedures in this area. This research is being done in part fulfilment towards a Doctorate in Education [name of institution removed].The researcher anticipates that the study will take two years to complete.

Why have I been chosen?

This study seeks the views of those working in or associated with three pre-registration degree courses in Dietetics, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. The project aims to include a variety of different groups of staff including academics, heads of department/programme directors, service managers and representatives from each of the professional bodies.

All members of staff working within or associated with the three academic departments, as identified above, have been sent a letter of invitation to participate in this study. Potential participants must have had active involvement in preparations leading to the recent review and approval of pre-registration courses and/or participation within course approval event(s) itself. If I receive a high response from staff to get involved and have more participants than is practicable within a qualitative study, I will let you know.

Appendix 7: Participant information sheet

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you whether you decide or not to take part. Your participation is totally voluntary. Any decision will in no way affect any relationship with the researcher, progress or general experience at work. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a Consent Form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. There are no implications of withdrawal from the project.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part you will be invited to 2-3 one-to-one interviews with the researcher. Each meeting will last no more than 90 minutes. Interviews will be in the style of a conversation. I am interested in listening to your stories and experiences. The first interview conversation will focus on your role and involvement in preparations for course approval and/or the actual event itself. Your thoughts will be recorded using a digital recorder. After the interview you will be sent a copy of the transcript to confirm its accuracy. The researcher will then contact you to check that you are still willing to continue and to arrange a second interview within 4-6 weeks after the first interview.

For the second interview conversation the researcher will ask you to bring along an object that portrays your experience of course review; this will be explained more fully in conversation with you during the first session. The reviewer will ask your permission to photograph the object. During this meeting you will be encouraged to comment on what you said previously and elaborate further on significant events or feelings. Your thoughts will be recorded on a digital recorder; again, you will be sent a copy of the transcript to confirm its accuracy. The researcher will then contact you to check that you are still willing to continue and to arrange a final meeting, within 4-6 weeks after the second interview.

The final interview conversation will encourage checking of the second transcript and allow you to make further changes to your comments/experiences. This meeting will also seek to ensure that you are content for me to use your experiences, as described by me, with an opportunity to read the final version.

You will also be free to contact me at anytime to share reflections that may arise as a result of our conversations.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Every effort will be made to ensure that all information, which is collected about you and your work setting during the research, will be kept strictly confidential. However, due to the small number of participants involved this cannot be absolutely guaranteed. You will be identified by a pseudonym and any information about your workplace will be anonymised using a code. Data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and a password protected electronic file. At the end of the study after the thesis has been examined all data will be destroyed by shredding/erasure of files.

What will happen to the findings of the research study?

The findings of the research study will form part of thesis submitted in fulfilment of a doctorate at the [institution name removed]. A summary of the findings will be sent to all participants. The findings are likely to be available two years after the start of the study. It is possible that anonymous data may be used in future publications.

Appendix 7: Participant information sheet

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being funded and organised by Rebecca Khanna as part of her doctoral programme at the [institution name removed].

Who has reviewed this study?

Prior to the research commencing this study has been reviewed and approved by the [institution name removed]. Advice has also been sought from the National Research Ethics Service. Permission has also been granted from each of the Heads of Department prior to staff being invited to participate.

What if there is a problem?

Any concern about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might suffer will be addressed. If you have any particular concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you may wish to either contact the researcher's supervisors, whose details are provided at the end of this sheet, [name removed]

Contact details for further information

If you have any further questions about the research please contact either the researcher or their supervisor.

Contact details for the researcher:	Contact details for the researcher's supervisors:
[details removed]	[details removed]

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and your interest in this study.

All participants will be given a copy of the information sheet

APPENDIX 8

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Reduced to a tick box? An inquiry exploring the journey of curriculum review and approval in pre-registration allied health professional degree programmes
Name of Researcher: Rebecca Khanna

Please initial box

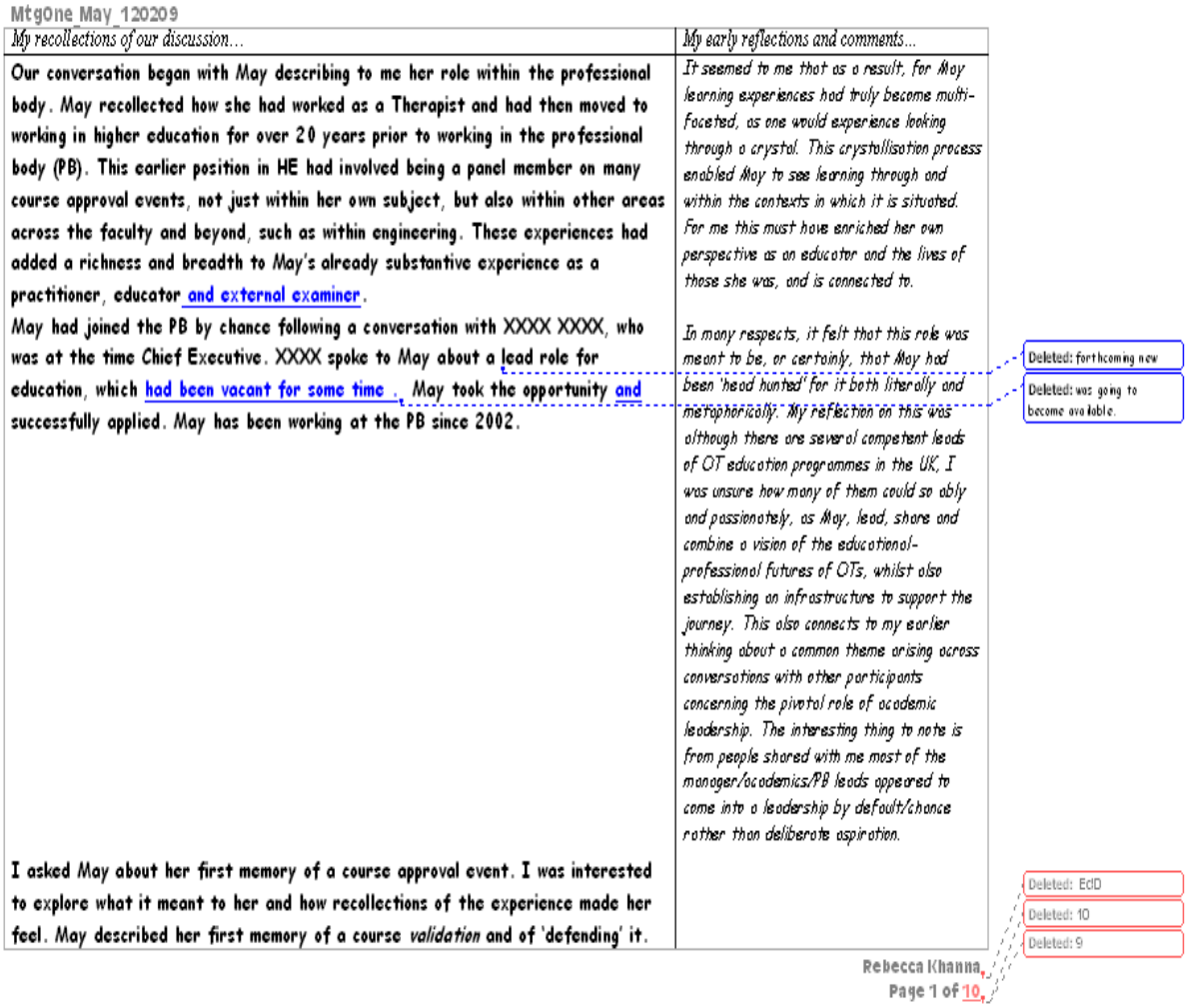
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, to ask questions and I have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. Such a decision will in no way affect the relationship with the researcher, my progress or general experience at work. ☐
3. I understand that the interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and confirm that I am happy to be recorded. ☐
4. I understand every effort will be made to anonymise the contributions of participants and their work setting, however, due to the small number of participants involved absolute anonymity cannot be totally guaranteed. ☐
5. I understand that the study may use quotations from the interview conversations when being written up. I am happy for anonymised quotations to be used when the study is written and used later in any publications. ☐
6. I understand that sections of data collected during the study, may be shared only with those working with the researcher, for instance the researcher's supervisor. This will only be done when all references to names, places and any identifying information have been removed. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data as required. ☐
7. I understand that all notes, transcripts and audiotapes will be stored in a locked cabinet. At the end of the study these will be destroyed after the thesis has been examined. ☐
8. I understand that the final report will be based on the researcher's understanding or interpretation of the text and is not intended to be any kind of literal truth about participants. ☐
9. I agree / do not agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	**Date**	**Signature**
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	**Date**	**Signature**

When completed 1 copy for the participant; 1 copy for the researcher

APPENDIX 9

Sample extract page from May's interview conversation including her annotations



MtgOne May_120209

My recollections of our discussion…	*My early reflections and comments…*
Our conversation began with May describing to me her role within the professional body. May recollected how she had worked as a Therapist and had then moved to working in higher education for over 20 years prior to working in the professional body (PB). This earlier position in HE had involved being a panel member on many course approval events, not just within her own subject, but also within other areas across the faculty and beyond, such as within engineering. These experiences had added a richness and breadth to May's already substantive experience as a practitioner, educator and external examiner. May had joined the PB by chance following a conversation with XXXX XXXX, who was at the time Chief Executive. XXXX spoke to May about a lead role for education, which had been vacant for some time . May took the opportunity and successfully applied. May has been working at the PB since 2002.	*It seemed to me that as a result, for May learning experiences had truly become multi-faceted, as one would experience looking through a crystal. This crystallisation process enabled May to see learning through and within the contexts in which it is situated. For me this must have enriched her own perspective as an educator and the lives of those she was, and is connected to.* *In many respects, it felt that this role was meant to be, or certainly, that May had been 'head hunted' for it both literally and metaphorically. My reflection on this was although there are several competent leads of OT education programmes in the UK, I was unsure how many of them could so ably and passionately, as May, lead, share and combine a vision of the educational-professional futures of OTs, whilst also establishing an infrastructure to support the journey. This also connects to my earlier thinking about a common theme arising across conversations with other participants concerning the pivotal role of academic leadership. The interesting thing to note is from people shared with me most of the manager/academics/PB leads appeared to come into a leadership by default/chance rather than deliberate aspiration.*
I asked May about her first memory of a course approval event. I was interested to explore what it meant to her and how recollections of the experience made her feel. May described her first memory of a course *validation* and of 'defending' it.	

Deleted: forthcoming new

Deleted: was going to become available.

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Rebecca Khanna, Page 1 of 10,

Red = Re I q who was speaking
Blue = Re list, of the day / of approval / role
Green = Significant others / organizational / bigger picture

Interview: Meeting One - Sam

Routine / ordering of tasks

Sam: In the [title removed], I seemed to do nothing but organise module approval and review the meetings or marks and school level course approvals. Lack of variety in routine cf specific focus

RK: Yeah?

Sam: It was a constant feature of my, of my day I think. Role/task design.

RK: What was that like? Time juggling

Sam: Erm, time consuming, fiddly, erm I don't mind the servicing of meetings like that, it's the setting them up that really, really is very frustrating, you know, making sure you've got the, all the right people in the right place at the right time. Erm, and that sort of thing. V control actually enacting right not creating

RK: Mmm. Mmm.

Sam: Yeah, it's, it's, it's difficult, you always wonder is it actually going to go off smoothly, is everybody going to turn up? Are we going to get the papers in time. Because that was another big problem is, is the, you know, the volume of paperwork that people have to plough through if your...that module or school level course approval event was actually going to be constructive. Relationships Reciprocal thinking

RK: Yeah.

Sam: You've got to get papers to them at least a week before the meeting but recognising that course teams are under pressure and working to their deadlines as well. Maintaining system by recognition Limit on time-reaction Separating functions

RK: How do you think, for example, how do you think at department level erm maybe staff there view, you know, the registry function? Do you think that they understand it well or...?

Sam: Erm, I think there's a common perception that, that we are quite bureaucratic, we keep quoting the regulations and we keep quoting policies on this and procedures for that. and erm which is true, there are regulations, there are polices, there are procedures but we do try and be as flexible as possible and as accommodating as possible. But within the boundaries within which we have to work. Role description Safeguarding Rules Status quo enactor (2)

RK: Yeah. Can you think of a time when a course approval has gone really well? And why, you know, what was it that enabled it to go well? Apart from the things that you've said about, you know, all the paper...the documentation was all ready, that went off on time, we've got all the

Interview: Meeting One - Sam

reviewers and everybody in the right place as it were, or they should be in the right place.

Sam: I think what really, what really makes an approval event go well is if people go in with the right attitude and that this is going to be a collegial discussion rather than you know we're going to find fault with what you've written and start picking holes in it.

RK: Yeah

Sam: Erm, if the all the groundwork has been done properly and the right people have been involved at the developmental stage of the course by the time it gets to a course approval event now there shouldn't be issues, it should be very much a rubber stamping exercise because all the niggles about whether or not this is included in the curriculum or there's a right balance between practical and theory, all that should have been ironed out at the developmental stage.

RK: Mmm. Do you think that that's the case or is that, is that, is it becoming more of a rubber stamping or do you think there are more edges that [laughs] should have been smoothed out shall I say as time has gone on?

Sam: And it is very much then a rubber stamping exercise. Because all the nitty gritty erm of content and what have you should have been sorted and approved at broader study level.

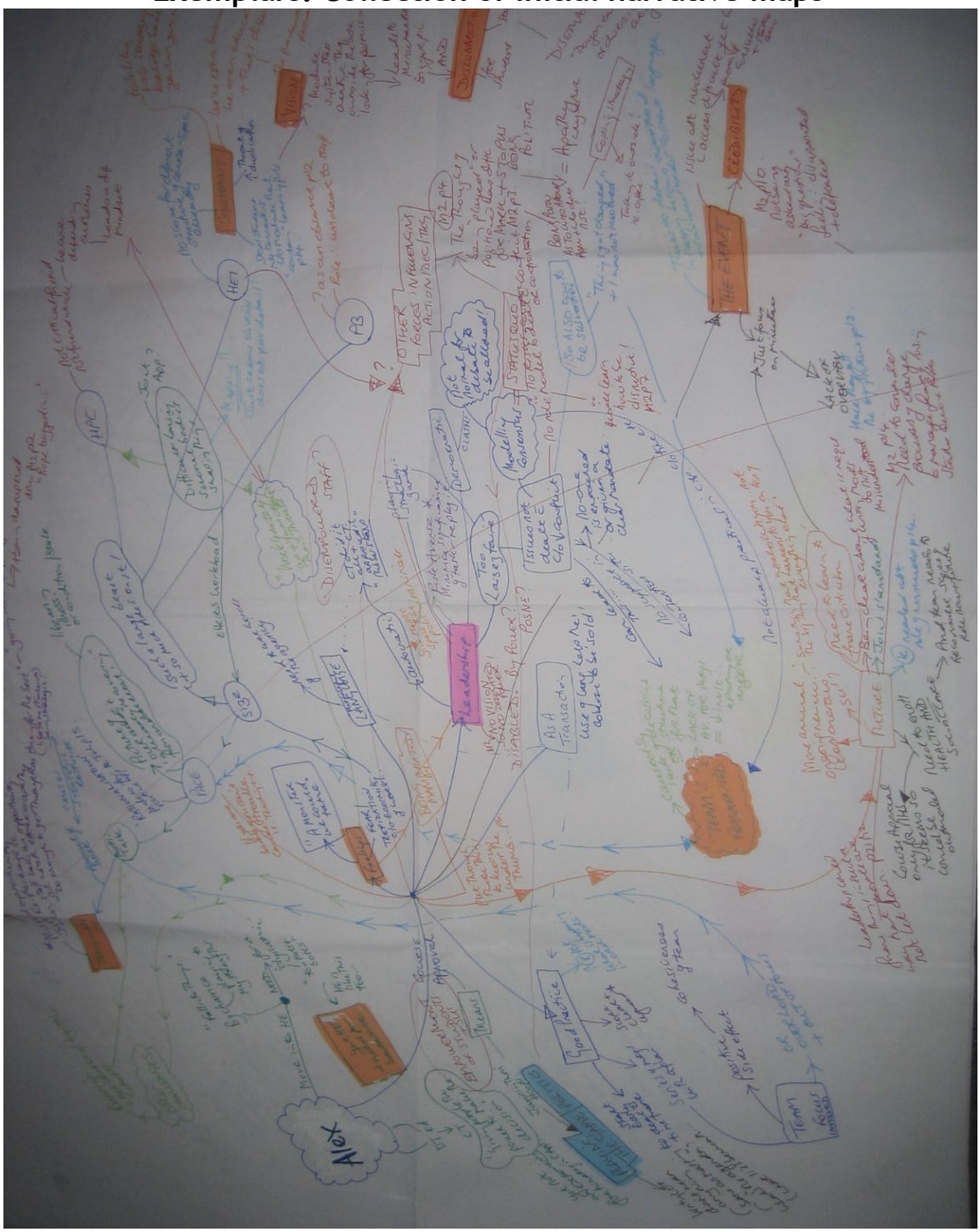
RK: Yeah.

Sam: Because you know you are the owners of the course, you are the ones who will be managing it, you are the ones who best know whether this course is fit for purpose. The people on the review and approval panel, A, it's a small panel now and you haven't got the subject expertise for each and every course that comes through. So it is very much more a generic view that they're looking at in the documents.

Sam: But the, the other courses, that require conjoint approval of some description, be it with HPC, NMC etc, or what have you, then they are very much still along the lines of the old course approval and review. So it's sort of, you know, you have two panels, you have the HPC panel and you have the university panel, each with their own particular agenda. Which can get a bit tricky at times. [laughs] And my experience of the, the two major reviews of health, erm, when we're doing all the pre-reg, erm, was that HPC, or the events that I acted as secretary to was actually [title removed],both times. I found very much that HPC drove the agenda of the

APPENDIX 11

Exemplars: Collection of initial narrative maps


Leadership
THE EVENT
HEI
HAC
P3
S3E
Team
Good practice
Positive effect
Decision making
Approval
Transition
Status quo
Creativity
Culture
Power?
Resistance
Learning
Strategy
Partnership
Project
Risk
Vision
Change
Conflict
Trust
Collaboration
Innovation
Leadership
Management
Evaluation
Impact
Process
Outcome
Stakeholder
Funding
Budget
Timeline
Objectives
Barriers
Opportunities
Challenges
Solutions
Recommendations
Conclusion
Introduction
Methodology
Literature review
Findings
Discussion
Limitations
Future research
Implications
Abstract
Keywords
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Appendix
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Map
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Photo
Video
Audio
Interview
Survey
Questionnaire
Data
Analysis
Results
Conclusion
Recommendations

Appendix 11: Exemplars: Collection of initial narrative maps

Appendix 11: Exemplars: Collection of initial narrative maps

APPENDIX 12

Exemplar Narrative Portrait

Sylvia's Narrative Portrait v3

(Strategic action, assured leadership and managing conflict)

Sylvia welcomed me into her ordered and organised office. Within the professional community, she is a well regarded senior manager academic; and for a considerable length of time has been responsible for the leadership and management of an allied health professional (AHP) programme within a UK higher education institution.

Sylvia began by recalling to me her move in to higher education, as something that 'came out of the blue' after a chance telephone conversation. Although at first it seemed she missed the environment of practice, subsequently, I felt she had left little to chance in making the best of all the opportunities. Sylvia told me she was one of the first academics to head developments in a degree within her own profession and now leads a successful programme offered in the UK and overseas. She has a high profile for maintaining quality standards epitomised by her role as a reviewer for several national bodies.

As we continue our conversation, Sylvia explains to me her thoughts about course approval. She seems to relish course approval events and finds them gratifying. Sylvia tells me:

> *"Course approval's a piece of cake, when you just, its just a task, quite exciting and interesting and I absolutely love approval events, you know I think they're really satisfying".*

Sylvia appears to adopt a proactive stance in her approach to work, includes preparations for approval, including curriculum review. In addition, the approval process does not just seem to be an event in itself but also possibly represents an opportunity for change. She makes use of an analogy, which I believe also reflects her character:

> *"And I think the analogy I draw is that it's like, the wave of the change is coming, and you've got a choice really. You can let it wash over you and come up spluttering the other side, or you can surf on it and use it as a mechanism to take you forwards".*

Yet despite a sense of optimism, Sylvia tells me that this process is supported by hard work, which is often invisible to others, demonstrated through placing emphasis on clear direction and leadership of colleagues. She believes, through giving strong, authoritative direction people feel comfortable and so able to perform well. For Sylvia this seems to entail the avoidance of conflict as she explains:

> *"I personally have a very, very strong dislike of any form of conflict, so one of the reasons I work hard at managing things well is to avoid conflicts. I know a lot of management models almost suggest that conflict is inevitable, I don't: that's not my experience really".*

Within our conversation, Sylvia refers to movements needing to be as 'slick as possible' and 'actually making things run smoothly', in order to get the best output for the least input. Her involvement in many course approval events, not only as an academic leader, reviewer and as adviser has enabled Sylvia to become very experienced and perceptive in discerning what is required. She identified this through various stances in her voice:

> *"The regulator will judge you like this…and you'll have a much easier time if your write this information in this particular way".*

Therefore, for Sylvia approaches to course approval also mean managing preparations and the event in particular ways in order to receive a positive outcome. This also seems to include adopting a position, which involves being political and strategic, through reflecting back to statutory bodies and commissioners their own rhetoric. Sylvia explained it like this:

> *"The main thing they want at any one time is whatever the current buzz thing that's come out of the Government; they want to see that it's in there".*

Using her considerable networks is another of the ways that Sylvia feels a sense of ease might be enabled, in what might be an adversarial situation, as she describes in the following scenario:

> *"When you are facing a reviewer across a desk, and they know that you're an HPC visitor and you know the ropes and they know that you're a professional body reviewer, that's helpful, not in a sort of intimidatory way, but in a: they're your colleagues…so there's a sort ease of it and a mutual respect"*

We moved on to talking about the implications of changes to the governance arrangements in the approval of allied health professional courses and Sylvia identified the impact of this as '*a huge shift in the balance of power',* in favour of the newly established regulatory body and away from the professional body. She expressed what she felt were the positives and negatives of the system. One of the positive attributes, which Sylvia placed emphasis on, was the transparency of the system and for her a sense of completeness, yet she also expressed concern:

> *"... but what's less good I suppose is you don't have the same kind of academic discussion and debate, but perhaps actually that's not what course approval is really about, perhaps there's another forum for that".*

The observation of the loss of debate is a strong story line amongst all the participants. Yet here there is the suggestion of change that has taken place over time and the suggestion to find somewhere else for this activity of discussion. Another complicating action of the quality assurance process for Sylvia, as a visitor, appears to be that although she believed the approval system has become streamlined and standardised, it has also led to feelings that 'everywhere you go it's the same'. For Sylvia, this has also led to difficulties in being able to gain an overview of how a whole course coheres together. She expressed this as a sense of loss to me, which was described as almost inevitable. Therefore, it seems over time external influences present a strong steer in directing the shape of the AHP curriculum. Sylvia appears to feel strongly that whilst the curriculum itself must be patient focussed, much of it is pre-determined by the various statutory stakeholders involved. She explained like this:

> *"When you are looking at a professional curriculum, what actually goes in it here and now is prescribed… you do get some leeway but you've got a QAA benchmark stage, you've got HPC and the professional body; there's a lot of overlap between them, but that probably determines [laughs] about 98% of what's in there…".*

Sylvia acknowledged with me the difficulties of modularisation and requirements of a 20 credit framework. She went on to recall a story, in which prior to course approval within curriculum review activities she told me of the constraints as, *'we absolutely couldn't have that anymore because there wasn't enough space in cutting down the number of boxes'.* Yet despite this potentially captive position, Sylvia emphasised to me course teams need to be proactive by being creative and not just observe the HPC checklists. Sylvia returns to her signature of strong academic leadership by explaining the facilitation of this process:

> *"…when you have that leadership engagement that expertise is really a facilitative tool to help everybody else to be able to perform at an optimal level and make sure that everything is really well organised so the disruption caused by course review is minimal, but mostly because of the way it was managed".*

In addition, she felt that modularisation was an effective way of organising the curriculum, and combined with those involved all knowing what their roles and the parameters were, any concerns with the process could be managed. Sylvia tells me:

> *"So giving a clear structure reassures people so that everybody knows the rules. If there's certain things you absolutely can't do even though somebody would love to… you know…then Erm if it's clear at the beginning that's just not negotiable then that takes that off the table".*

I finally asked Sylvia about how the whole approval process might be enhanced. She gave the impression that she felt the level of professional influence within the approval process had been reduced to a level that it is now unhelpful. Sylvia believes that expertise exists, yet perhaps within the current system of approval is under utilised. She suggests that course teams would do well to access an external adviser in order to be prepared and in that way, *'it's easier to avoid the angst and to have smoothness'*. In addition, Sylvia also appears to be recommending a change in the

mindset of course teams such that review and improvements to curriculum become more of an iterative process, as she outlines:

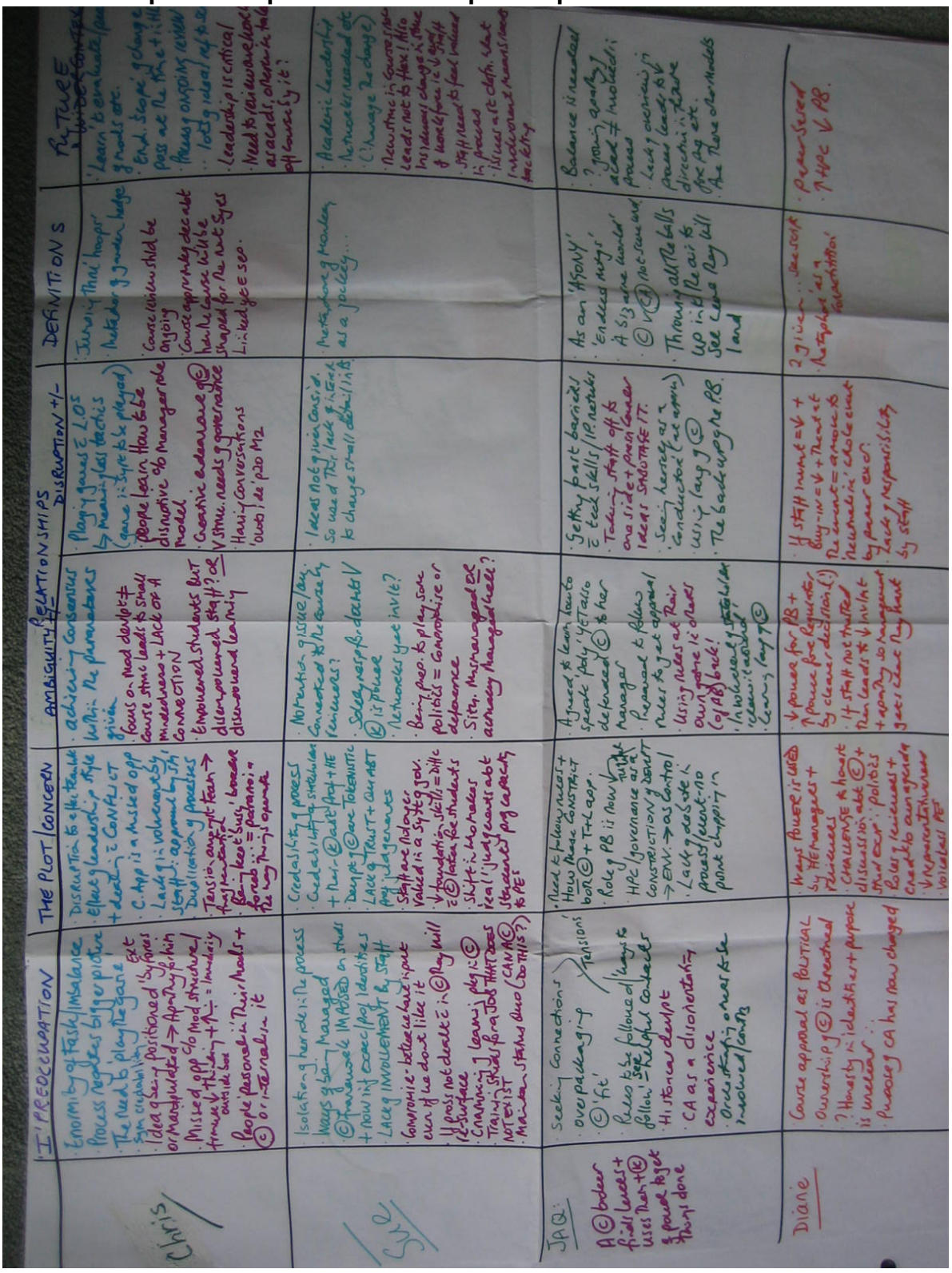
> *"I mean really you have an incremental process then you have a more strategic intervention at the bigger review".*

In the end, Sylvia believes course approval events deserve to be managed closely if a successful outcome is to be achieved, which as she explains involves simply knowing and following the rules. This concluding comment sums up what Sylvia thinks about curriculum review leading to course approval events:

> *"I know I do bang on a bit about the rules and regulations and the authority bit, but basically you have to learn the system…you have to learn what's required and you have to make what you want to do fit the process of review and the system in terms of boxes et cetera that you've got to fill. It's not hard."*

APPENDIX 13

Exemplar comparison across participants' narratives



APPENDIX 14

Mapping degrees of framing (control) for each positional identity

Degrees of framing	Boundary Broker	Governance Trustee	Enabling Strategist	Professional Guardian
Boundaries	Decentred +	Centred +	Centred	Centred
Temporality	Decentred +	Centred	Decentred	Decentred -
Routines	Decentred -	Centred+	Centred	Decentred +
Navigation	Decentred +	Centred	Decentred	Centred -
Adaptation	Decentred +	Centred -	Decentred	Centred
Network(s)	Decentred +	Centred	Decentred	Centred +
Translation	Decentred +	Centred -	Decentred	Centred

KEY:- Degrees of framing for each adopted position linked to Dynamic Influences

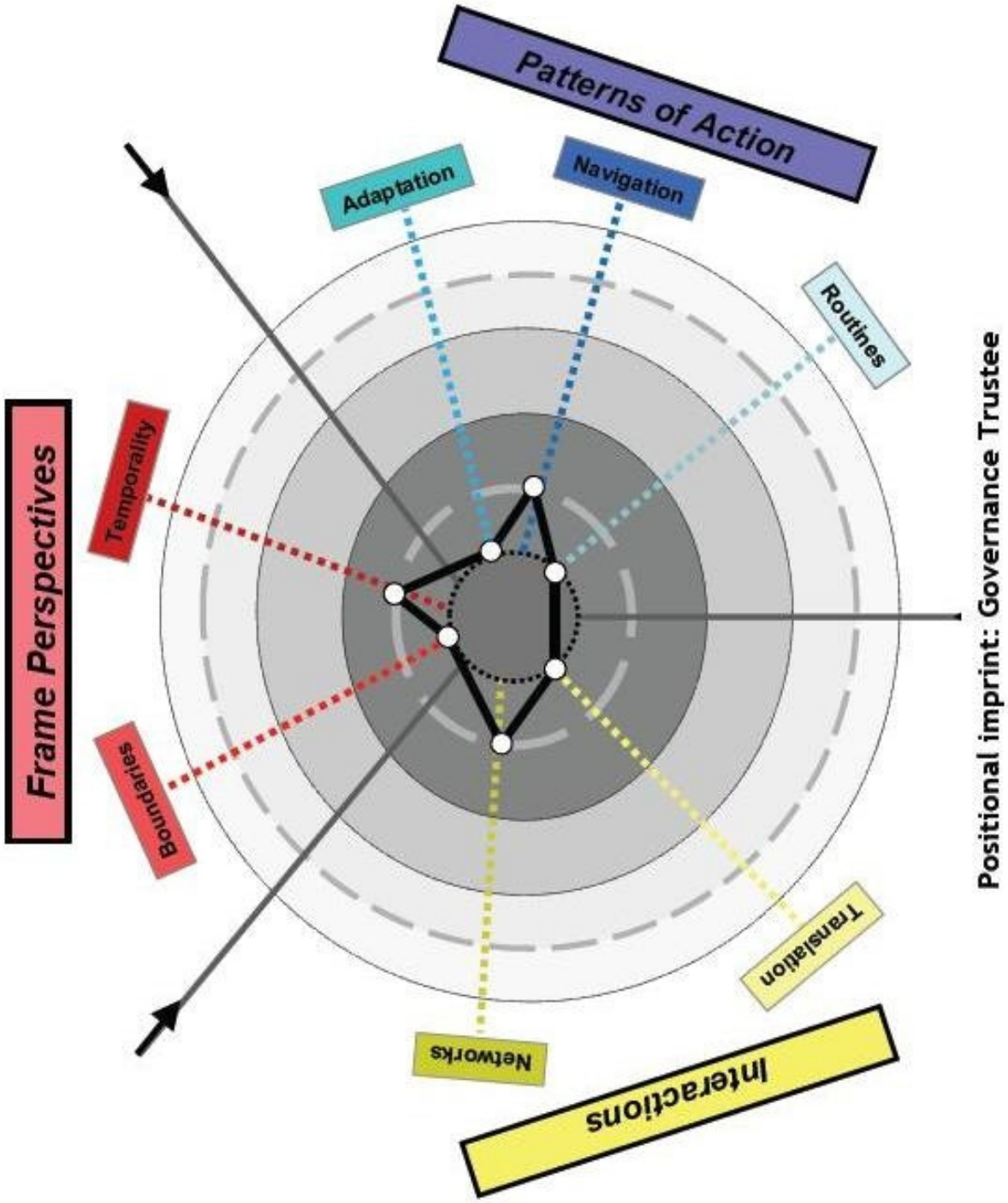
Strong framing = Centred **Weak framing = Decentred**

+ = framing more intense - = framing less intense

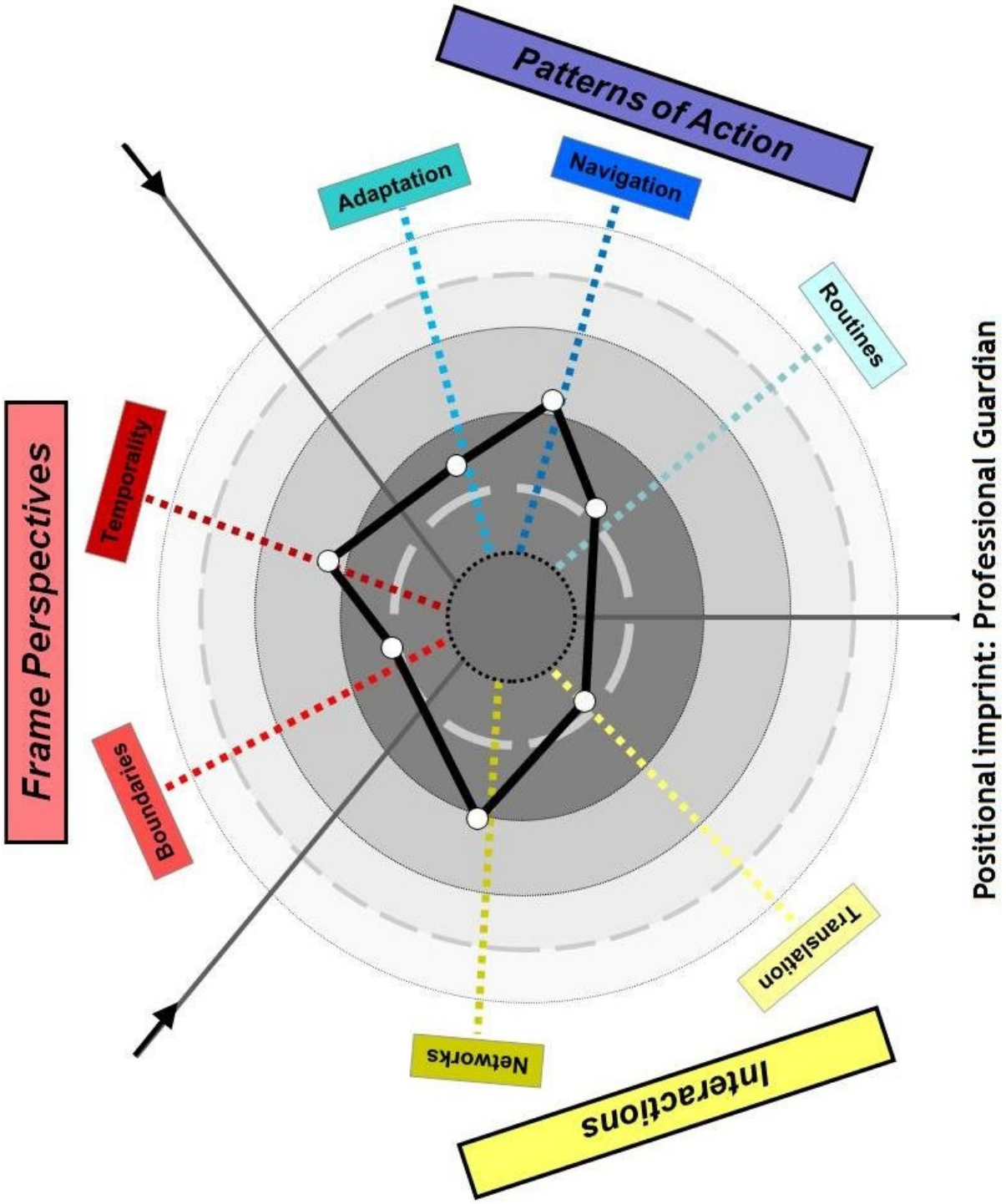
Appendix 14: Mapping degrees of framing (control) for each positional identity

'Centred' and 'Decentred' positional narratives: typical definitions of the varying degrees		
Frame Perspectives		*Definition*
	Boundaries	+ Ways of understanding are contained and determined by parameters identified by the surrounding context(s)
		- Ways of understanding are less determined by the surrounding context(s). Interpretation by the individual is more important
	Temporality	+ Processes in approval are understood as decided by time-place relationships
		- The process of approval is acknowledged as being moderated by time-place though this dynamic is less important
Patterns of Action	*Routines*	+ Initiated externally, action is within the rules or procedures set. Maintenance of these creates an equilibrium and so is to be safeguarded
		- Procedures are actively used (against) systems to an advantage. Rules turned and used against themselves in approval processes
	Navigation	+ Movement is limited to local areas in which the function of a position is operationalised
		- Scope for moving around the spaces of approval is largely unrestricted. Movement is generally without difficulties due to effective management of translation and adaptation.
	Adaptation	+ Performance in approval is enacted externally to course teams therefore alteration in presentation of the self does not reside within participants themselves and generally unnecessary
		- Capacity to alter the presentation of oneself is unhampered. Individuals are able to recreate themselves in different circumstances and seize opportunities
Interactions	*Networks*	+ Individual preferences for making links with others are downplayed and seen as largely unnecessary to fulfil the function
		- Openings to maintain and extend contacts with different people and organisations are unrestricted. Consequently, networks are characteristically well developed
	Translation	+ Capability for interpretation is limited, bound by location and function
		- Individual preferences for interacting with others are free and open. Capacity to interpret situations is unencumbered and well developed

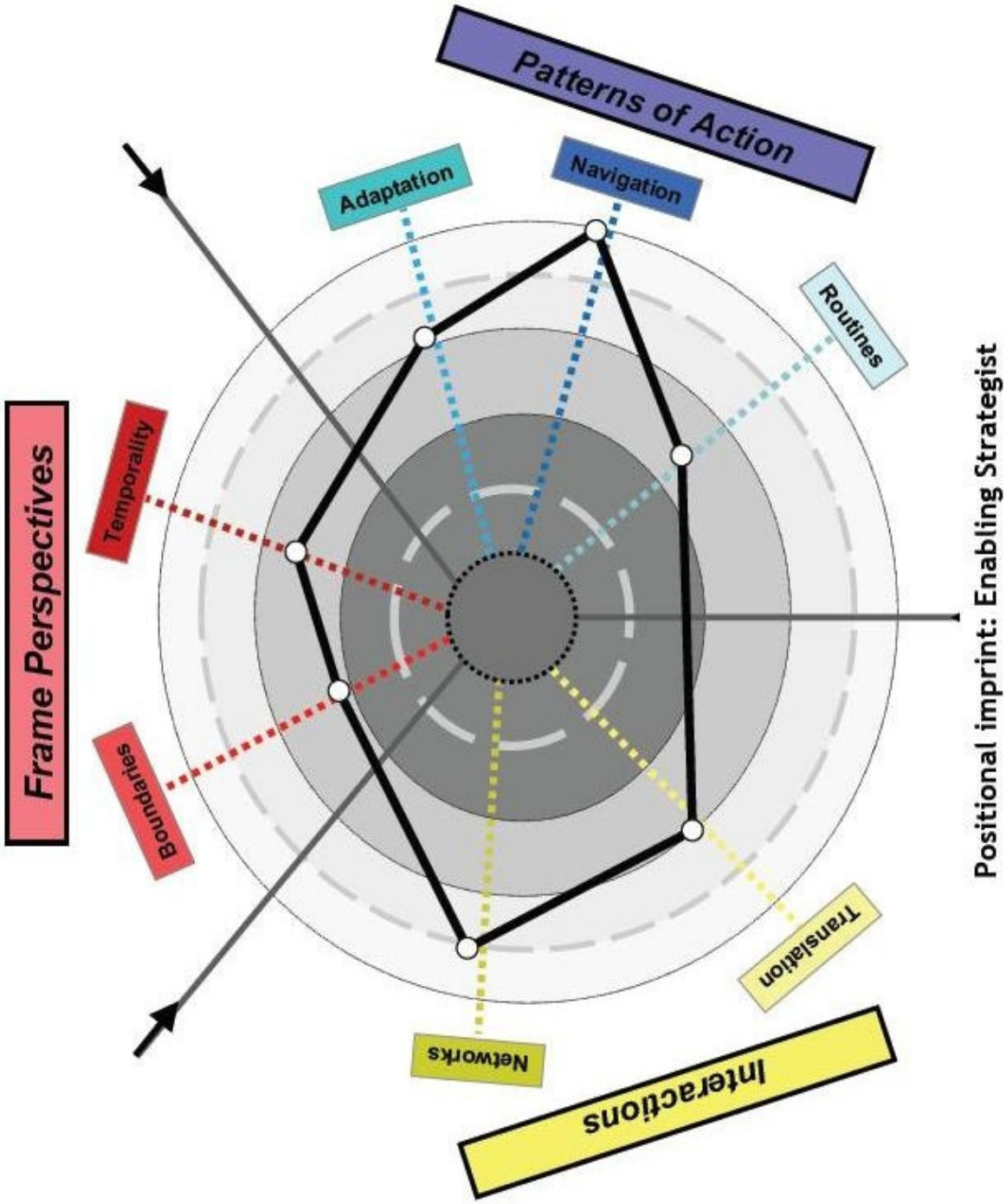
APPENDIX 15


Patterns of Action
Adaptation
Navigation
Routines
Frame Perspectives
Temporality
Boundaries
Networks
Translation
Interactions
Positional imprint: Governance Trustee

Appendix 15: Positional imprints



Appendix 15: Positional imprints



Appendix 15: Positional imprints